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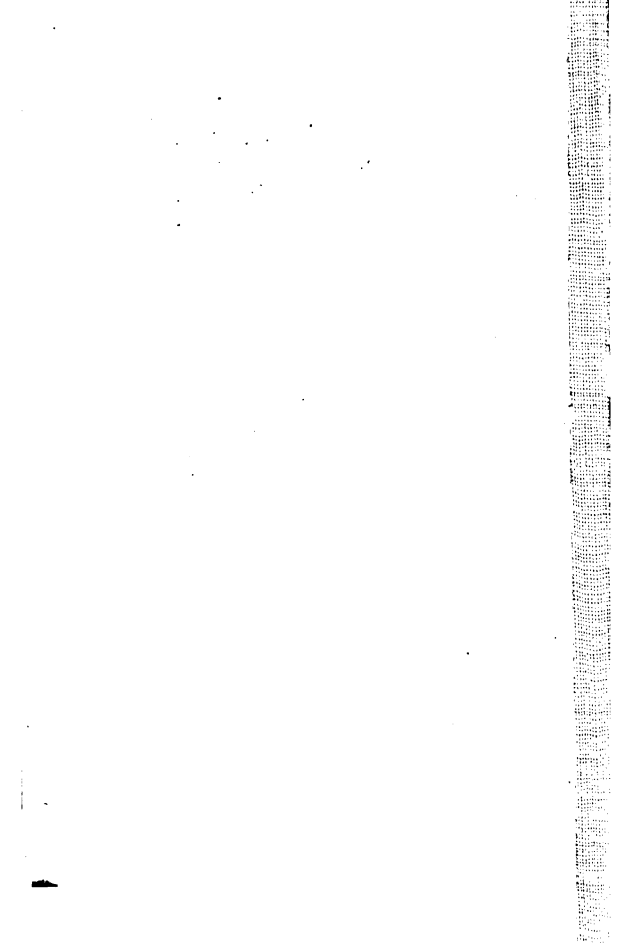
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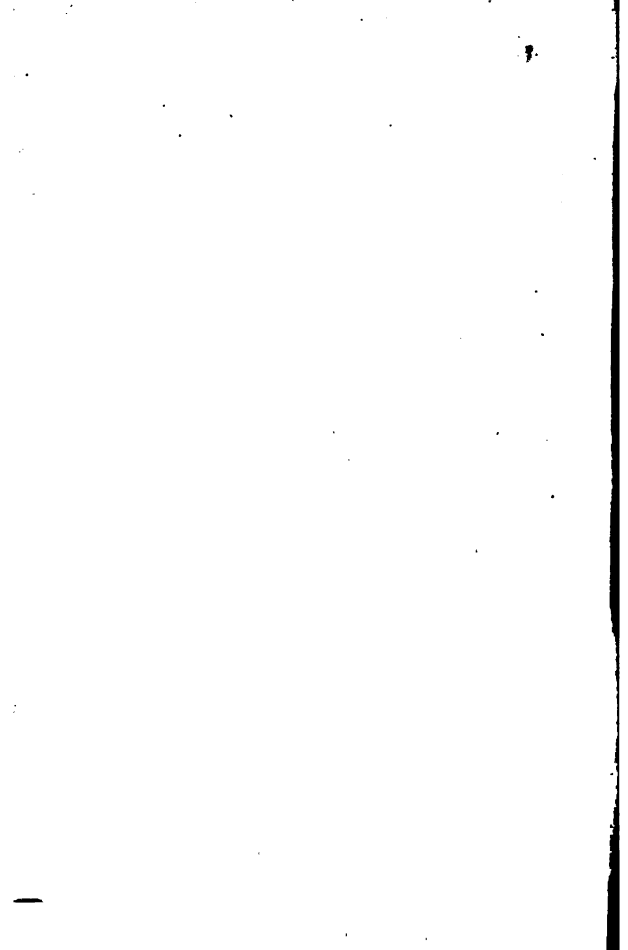


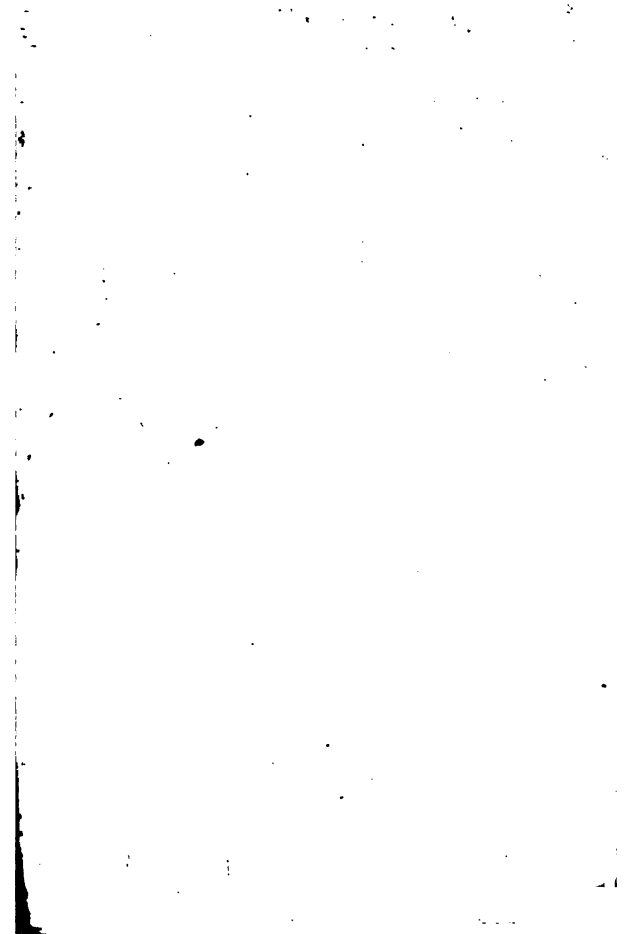
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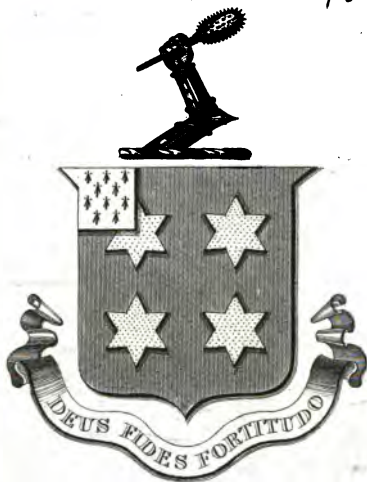








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THE  
ANGLER AND TOURIST'S GUIDE

TO THE  
RIVERS, LAKES, AND REMARKABLE PLACES  
IN THE  
NORTHERN COUNTIES OF SCOTLAND.

TO WHICH IS ADDED  
INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUNG ANGLERS.

BY ANDREW YOUNG,

INVERSHIN, SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

EDINBURGH:

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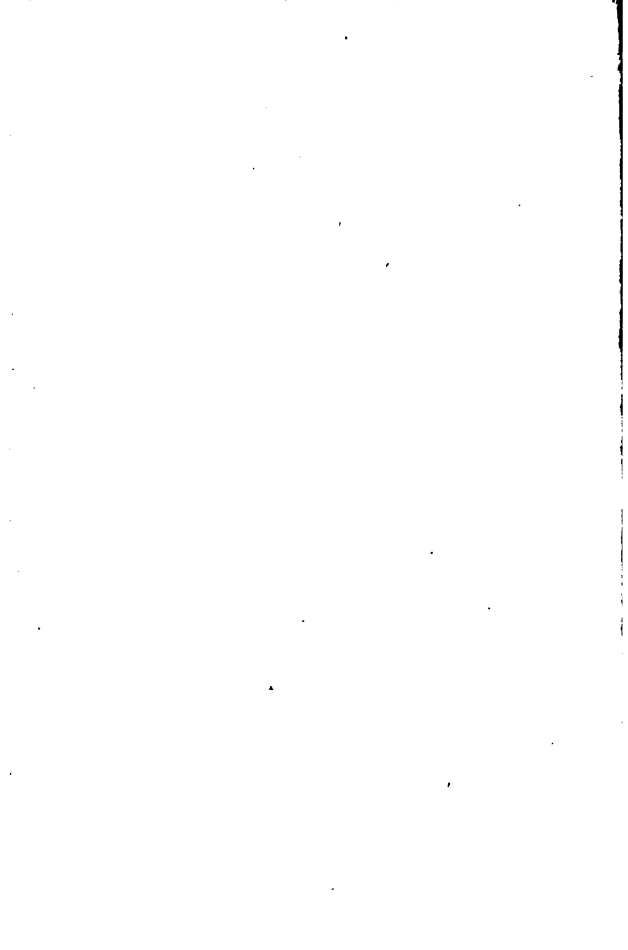
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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages are written almost entirely for the information and use of anglers. I am aware that when English sportsmen cross the Borders on their way to the North, they are as likely to get wrong information as right about these extreme northern regions. The only present sources of information are the innkeepers and fishing-tackle makers; the former of whom are apt to praise the river nearest their own hospitable doors, and the latter have their accounts of rivers from birds of passage, reporting, perhaps correctly enough, as to the state they them-

selves happened to find the rivers in ; but as rivers vary with the variations of the weather, these accounts are not to be depended on for a week on end, and hence arise many disappointments.

If the angler finds the weather very dry, he may delay his tour for a short time ; but if he finds it damp, and likely to keep the rivers in good size, the sooner he arrives on the banks the better. I have described the rivers in their low and almost useless state ; therefore, if anglers arrive and see them in that state, he need not grumble and blame this, that, and the other thing for the want of sport, but just content himself like a wise man, and pray for rain. I have also described the rivers when in good fishing trim, and when in that state, if fish are not caught, we must blame the angler for the want of patience



or perseverance, or for some other fault of his own, which perhaps he is not aware of; but if he would study the instructions given at the end of this Guide, he might perhaps there find out the reason of his half-empty basket.

I would fain hope that, from the plain description given of all the rivers, the angler will be able to select what, in his own estimation, is the best. Some prefer fishing in rough rapid streams, while others like the easy deep pools, level banks, and an easy footpath, where they have no trouble in landing the fish. The description is suitable enough for both of these classes; and those who like short walks and easy distances, have it in their power to set themselves down in such situations, where the comforts of the inn and the pleasures of the river are closely united.

All these things being pretty fully explained, I hope there will be little difficulty in the selection. The roads and routes for travelling from the south, as well as in the northern counties, are fully described, so that the traveller can reach his intended destination without farther enquiry than consulting the Guide—the want of such a publication, having been often expressed to me by visitors, forming my motive and excuse for this attempt.

INVERSHIN, 1857.

THE  
ANGLER'S GUIDE  
TO  
THE RIVERS AND LOCHS IN THE  
NORTH OF SCOTLAND.

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ANGLING has now become one of the best appreciated of our national sports. The invalid seeks the retirement and invigorating braces of the streams running through the heath-clad Highland glens for the restoration of health, and the vigorous seek and find, in the same means, the increase and preservation of theirs.

As year after year produces new swarms of fish, it also produces at least proportionate swarms of new sportsmen, many of whom, only hearing of the former good success of friends, proceed northward without either guide or map, and are often misled, after arriving in the north, from incorrect information. To supply that

want, and also in answer to the numerous enquiries regarding rivers, inns, and roads, I shall endeavour to state, as correctly as possible, the situation of the various rivers and lochs—the nearest inns to these rivers—the probable sport to be expected—and the most practicable route to and from the south. In doing so, I will take the rivers in rotation, beginning on the west coast of the county of Sutherland.

It is necessary to remark generally of the *Lochs* in Sutherlandshire, that (with the exception of Loch Naver) they are free to all such respectable and fair anglers as may apply for permission to the local factors. It is different with the rivers containing salmon, the position of each of which, in this respect, I shall mention as I go along.

### I.—RIVER KIRKIAG.

This is a small river, and forms the boundary line on the west coast between Sutherland and Ross shires. It rises in the heights of Assynt, near Elfin, where numerous hill burns form Loch Fewn, which loch, and four burns farther down the Strath, are the feeders of the river. It falls into the sea at Inver-Kirkiag, where, from the appearance of the

bay or sea-loch into which it falls, we should be led to form the opinion that the river would be frequented by numerous shoals of salmon. And this would undoubtedly be the case, were it not for this misfortune, that there happens to be an insurmountable fall, over which no salmon can pass in any size of water, about a mile and a half above the mouth of the river; and as the bed of the river, from the fall to where it meets the sea, is generally rocky, and the spawning ground thereby far too limited, there is but little probability of salmon here ever becoming very numerous, unless they are artificially admitted above the fall, where there is abundance of excellent breeding ground. Yet notwithstanding the unfortunate situation of the fish here, if the river be in a proper size, moderate sport may be expected, and with fish of a fair size. I have heard of as many as a dozen of grilises being killed here in one day, but this may be considered as something extra. A few early salmon have been got in this river, but I could not warrant anything like the sport that would satisfy an angler earlier than about the latter end of April, and even then it depends much on the state of the river. But should the river get too low for angling, as all small rivers must of course do at various times in the course of the

season, there are excellent fresh-water lochs among the hills in the immediate neighbourhood that abound with trout, some of which are found to be six pounds weight. The small trout of a pound and upwards take the fly freely. But the phantom-minnow of Brown of Aberdeen for trolling in day-time, Flinn's flexible minnow in the evening, and Allie's Archimedean minnow at night, must be used to procure good sport among the *Salmo ferox* and large grey trout of these lochs. By attending to these flies and baits, any sportsman, with a fair share of patience and perseverance, who inclines to visit this locality, will have no reason to complain of the want of sport; but, unfortunately, in many cases the want of patience is severely felt. Anglers should not, as I have sometimes seen otherwise good anglers do, throw aside the tackle at the first refusal, and blame the want of fish, the want of clouds, the want of rain, the want of wind, and a thousand and one other wants, when the real and only want was, the want of patience and perseverance.

The river Kirkiag is situated half an hour's walk from Mr. Thomas M'Kenzie's commodious inn at Loch Inver, where the accommodation is ample and good. A mail car runs thence to Golspie twice a week, on Wednesday and

Saturday, and returns to Loch Inver on Monday and Thursday, carrying the mails and passengers; and a Glasgow steamboat calls at Loch Inver once a fortnight. Therefore, sportsmen who intend visiting this locality have now ample opportunity of doing so—*First*, by the steamer from Glasgow to Loch Inver; *Second*, by steamer from Glasgow to Inverness by the Caledonian Canal, from Inverness to Golspie by the daily mail, and from Golspie on Monday and Thursday by the mail car; *Third*, by railway, *viâ* Aberdeen to Inverness, or by the coach from Perth to Inverness by the Highland road, and thence to Golspie by daily mail; or, *Fourth*, by steamer from London or Edinburgh to Invergordon, from thence to Tain, whence a mail car, carrying mails and passengers, starts for Lairg on the arrival in Tain of the mail from the south. The route from Tain to Lairg is much shorter than the route by Golspie, for the mail car from Golspie to Loch Inver has to pass Lairg. Still there is another chance advantage by going by Golspie, that is, the car may be full of passengers by the time it arrives at Lairg, which might cause a disappointment to those at Lairg, as passengers from the extreme ends of the route have always the preference. I have thus pointed out various ways by which

anglers can reach Loch Inver, and I would add an advice to pack up in April and proceed northward, for by that time Mr. M'Kenzie will be looking out by every mail, and the midges will not have made their appearance. I must say frankly that later in the season these petty pests will make acquaintance with every bit of every face, their impudence or ignorance being such that they have no more respect for a lord than they have for his gilly.

The salmon-fishing on the Kirkiag is let to Mr. M'Kenzie, the innkeeper at Loch Inver, who lets it to anglers (two rods only being permitted at a time) at 10s. 6d. per day per rod, the fish caught being delivered up.

## II.—THE INVER.

This river is about six miles long. Its principal feeder is Loch Assynt, which receives the waters of Loanan and Troligill, both rivers into which the salmon ascend and spawn during the breeding season. Although, during the time that these small rivers are flooded, the fish that ascend may get a good part of their ova deposited, I have some reason to fear that as soon as the rivers fall into a low state, the spawning fish do not always meet their friends. However, be that



as it may, the seed that has actually been deposited there must add considerably to the grilises of the Inver river ; for although the fish that breed and are bred in these small rivers—feeders of the loch—would undoubtedly proceed to these rivers in the following year, yet, as they must go up the Inver to arrive at these streams, I have no doubt but that many of them are caught in the resting pools of the Inver along with others, and still add to the value of that river. There are other large hill-burns that fall into Loch Assynt, where sea-trout ascend and spawn ; and when the loch, which is seven miles long, is once properly filled with water, with the assistance of these feeders, the river runs in good angling trim for some time, and when in that size in June, July, and to the middle of August, the angling is very good. But it need not be expected that the angling during all that time will be first rate, for if dry clear weather set in in June, the sport is bad, whatever be the numbers of fish in the river. These are the times that require patience. I have seen fair sport here in May, and I have known May pass with not one salmon killed on the river, but such years are exceptions, and often a few good salmon may be killed in May, although the Inver be a late river. And should it happen to be

low, and not in good fishing order, there is always to be found variety of first-rate sport among the trout in the numerous hill lochs in that neighbourhood. Loch Assynt abounds with excellent trout, from the *Salmo ferox* of twenty pounds down to the finnock and burn trout of half a pound weight; and in the latter part of the season, excellent sea-trout are got here in abundance. In the hill lochs, the source of burns that fall into the Inver, are often found very fine sea-trout, that ascend these burns when flooded. Therefore, between the river and the various lochs, none need fear the want of sport.

The scenery here is splendid. To the north of Loch Assynt is to be seen the lofty Ben More, whose ravines are filled with snow for nine months of the year; and in looking south, you see the beautiful engine-turned-like "sugar loaf," far overtopping the neighbouring hills, and looking down on the lovely glens and rivers on both sides.

From the loch to the mouth of the Inver the river is composed of fine pools and rocky-bottomed streams, just such situations as salmon choose for their retreats when inclined to rest from their travels, and where the angler may always expect to find them. Both banks of the river are beautifully mingled with

natural birch and rocks, the one certainly adding to the beauty of the other, and both sweetened by the morning breezes over the heather-bells.

On the banks of Loch Assynt may be seen the ruins of an old castle, about which we hear many traditional stories. This castle was the residence of Neil Macleod, the laird of Assynt, in the year 1650, when the Marquess of Montrose fought his last battle, still known as the battle of Craigchoynechan. After his defeat, the Marquess, with a few followers, fled towards Assynt, where, as tradition has it, Neil Macleod, pretending friendship, got the Marquess betrayed into his castle, and kept him prisoner until he got him sent to Edinburgh, where he was beheaded. Sir Robert Gordon, who wrote the history of these times, and whose writings may be relied on, says—"This miraculous victory happened on the 27th of April 1650 years, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, at Craigchoynechan, beside Carbisdell. James Graham (Marquess of Montrose) and the Earl of Kinowl, escaping with six or seven in their company, wandered up that river (the Kyle and Oykel) the whole ensuing night and next day, and the third day also, without any food or sustenance, and at last came within the country of Assynt.

The Earl of Kinowl, being faint for lack of meat, and not able to travel any farther, was left there among the mountains, where it was supposed he perished. James Graham had almost perished, but that he fortun'd in his misery to light upon a small cottage in that wilderness, where he was supplied with some milk and bread. Immediately after the feight Captain Andro Munro did write to Neil Macleod, laird of Assynt, who had married his sister, desiring him earnestly to apprehend any who might come into his country, and chiefly James Graham. The laird of Assynt was not negligent, but sent parties everywhere. Some of them met James Graham, accompanied only with one, Major Sinclair, an Orkney man. The parties apprehended them both, and brought them to Ardvreck, the laird of Assynt's chief residence; from where Sir James Graham was conveyed to Skibo Castle, from thence to Brahan Castle, and then to Edinburgh, where he was sentenced to be hanged publicly at the Market Cross of Edinburgh, and to be quartered. His head to be put above the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, where his uncle's head (the Earl of Gowrie) was placed for the Gowrie Conspiracy in 1600." The account I have given of the ruins of this old castle, I am aware, has no connection with angling,

although it has with many anglers, for we find among that class men of science, naturalists, and antiquaries.

The inn at Loch Inver is situated close to the foot of the Inver river; and Inisindamff Inn, Mr. M. M'Grigor's, is situated on the banks of Loch Assynt. Both are excellent and commodious inns, with obliging landlords, whose only care, I am sure, will be to please their guests. The river can be fished from either of these inns, although Mr. M'Kenzie at Loch Inver alone has power to let the angling.

The routes for travelling here are exactly the same as described for the Kirkiag River: but as it may save inquiry afterwards, I may as well here describe the route from Tain to Loch Inver. One mile from Tain, on the right, is the farm house and distillery of Marangie, occupied by Mr. W. Mathison. Two miles from Tain, on the right, and close to the road, is the farm house of Ardjachie, occupied by Mr. James Clarke. Five miles from Tain, on the right, is the parish church of Edderton; and a little farther on, on the left, is the farm house and distillery of Balblair, occupied by Mr. Andrew Ross; and on the right, a mile in the distance, is the farm of Ardmore. Six miles from Tain, on the left, and close to

the road, is the farm-house of Donnie, occupied by Mr. David Finlay. Eight miles from Tain, on the left, is the farm house of Fern, the property of Mr. Mathison of Ardross, and occupied by Mr. John Baigrie; and a mile farther on, on the right, is Fern Cottage. A little farther on, on the right, is the farm house of Wester Fern, occupied by Mr. John Munro. Thirteen miles from Tain, on the right, and close to the road, is the farm-house of Kincardine, occupied by Dr. Gordon; and the parochial schoolhouse. On the left here, is the parish church of Kincardine; and at a little distance Kincardine Manse. Fourteen miles from Tain is Ardgay Inn, occupied by Mr. Kinghorn, one of the most obliging innkeepers on the road. One mile farther on is Bonar Bridge and Bonar Village. The bridge is a modern erection, and consists of two stone arches, 50 and 60 feet span respectively, and one iron arch, 150 feet span. Bonar Inn, occupied by Mr. Robert M'Kenzie, is situated at the east end of the bridge. It is a good house with good attendance. Two miles farther on, on the right, is a very neat shooting box, on the property of, and belonging to, Mr. Dempster of Skibo, and also the farm-houses of Balblair, occupied by Mr. William Cuthbert. Four and a half miles from Bonar

Bridge is the River Shin, Shin Bridge, and Inveran Inn. Anglers who intend to fish the River Shin (of which we shall speak in course) should be set down here, as the mail car now proceeds up Shin Glen on its way to Lairg. Four miles from Shin Bridge, on the left, and a little in the distance, is Achany House, one of the seats of Sir James Matheson, M.P. Two miles farther on is Lairg Inn, occupied by Mr. Torrance, a well-disposed, and always well-provided host. On the Mondays and Thursdays the mail gig leaves Lairg for Loch Inver. Eight miles from Lairg there is a bridge over the Cassley river; and on the left, at a small distance, stands the House of Rosehall, another of Sir James Matheson's seats. Seven miles farther on is Oykel Bridge and Oykel Inn. From Oykel Inn to Inisindamff Inn is seventeen miles, over a bleak, barren hill, heather and rocks being the principal objects in view. From Inisindamff Inn down to Loch Inver is about fourteen miles of a beautiful drive, which is certain to compensate for the dreariness of the last stage.

In proceeding from Inisindamff northward, which is the only route practicable by land, about ten miles north we come to Kyle Sku, so famous for its quantity and quality of herring. From above the ferry house, by

looking to the right, we see the fine wild and rugged hills of Glen Dhu and Glen Coul. A small river from among the hills of Glen Dhu falls into the top of that arm of the sea called Kyle Sku, or Loch Dhu. In this river, in a wet season, fair fishing of grilse and sea-trout can be got; but as this stream can only be reached conveniently by means of a boat from the ferry, few tourists or anglers venture to the spot, and generally content themselves by looking at the fine scenery afar off. After crossing the Kyle here we soon enter among very rugged broken rocks, a great part of which seem to be the most barren and useless parts of the county, with nothing to divert the eye except a hill burn, and a small loch here and there. We meet with a small river near Badcaul, in which grilse and sea-trout are often caught. And, if I rightly recollect, the clergyman at Edderachillis, whose manse and glebe are in that neighbourhood, has, or claims a right to, a cruive on that river. However that may be, a cruive was in full operation there some years ago, and abundance of fish in the tideway at the mouth of the river. This stream is connected with a chain of freshwater lochs, in all of which trout are so numerous, and so fine in size and quality, that an angler will find ample sport, as well as reward,



were he to visit these lochs on a fine May-day. A little farther on, and we arrive at Badcaul Bay. On our left, we pass the magnificent curing-houses, erected there some years ago by the Duke of Sutherland. We also, on the left, pass the church and manse of Edderachillis, situated on the fine sunny side of the hill, as most manses are. From a little above the manse, an excellent view is got of the spacious bay, dotted over with its numerous islands, on which the sheep are seen grazing. Three miles farther on, we arrive at Scourie, a straggling township, where the inhabitants have got nice lots of land, and wear a comfortable appearance. The house of Mr. M'Ivor, one of the Duke's factors, is situated at the base of a picturesque hill, which forms the north side of the inlet to Scourie Bay. In this bay stands the noted island of Handa, which slopes from north to south. At one time a few sea-girt tenants were located on the southern side, who were subject to a queen, and whoever happened to be the oldest woman on the island was Queen of Handa. I daresay jails and rural police were unknown in the north in those days, for Lynch law and the Gallows Hill seemed to be the order of the day, and the Queen of Handa, like others in feudal power, must needs be obeyed. The north

side of this island is formed of perpendicular rocks, as bold and as wild as the rocks of St. Kilda, and as much frequented by wild fowl. They congregate there in their breeding season in unaccountable numbers. The hundreds that are killed in a day are never missed from among the immense congregation. And I must say, that a visit to Handa in June would be a great treat to many a southern who has never seen birds other than a pheasant in a field, or a sparrow on a hedge. There is an excellent inn at Scourie, kept by Mr. Tough, as jolly a fellow and as good a soul as ever poured mountain-dew either into or out of a crystal measure. The lochs in the neighbourhood of Badcaul, as well as those in the Scourie district, can be easily fished from this commodious and comfortable inn; and I would advise sportsmen on their journey from one salmon river to another, never to pass such mines of sport as these lochs are certain to produce. The roads in all directions are so fine (not a toll-bar within the county, though it contains about 500 miles of excellent roads), and Mr. Tough, with his dog-cart, is so obliging, that, for a very small hire, he will set the angler down at the very water's edge. Scourie Inn is just six miles from the river Laxford by an excellent road and pleasant drive, which river I now intend to describe.

## III.—RIVER LAXFORD.

This is the second best angling river in Sutherland during June, July, and the middle of August. It is composed of pools, rapids, streams, and rocky currents, the very situations that salmon wish for, and the very places, weather and water permitting, where salmon are almost sure to take the fly—not only to rise to the fly, for there are some rivers composed of deep pools with smooth bottoms, in which salmon rise well but hook ill, but this is not the case in Laxford, for here the fly steals over the rocks, between which the salmon rest watching for insects, and is seldom or never allowed to pass unnoticed. Immediately under the bridge there is an excellent pool, dark, deep, and rocky, and as the tide flows close into the foot of the pool, it gets a fresh supply of fish each tide during the season that salmon enter the sea-loch. In a suitable season a few salmon may be got here in May, but being one of the short-seasoned rivers, the first of June is more advisable for beginning the sport. I say here a short-seasoned river in place of saying a late river, for we have no late rivers in the county, and but few, if any, in Scotland. We have early rivers to be sure—for all the Sutherland

rivers east of Cape Wrath are early rivers—but, at the same time, that does not make the rivers that give no clean fish earlier than May or June late rivers; because in these rivers where the fish do not enter till far into the season, by the middle of August, the fish that run up are as foul, dark in the colour, and bagged with spawn, as they are in early rivers that give clean salmon in December and onwards. The Tweed would be an early river were the laws regulating that river suitable to the natural habits of the fish; but in place of that, those laws have tried to make Tweed a late river, whereby they have brought the famous Border stream to the very brink of ruin; and had it not been for its large size, and the natural capacity of the breeding streams which are its tributaries, it would have been fishless long ere now. It is a great satisfaction to me that, in the capacity of witness before Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons, I have this year contributed what I could to the passing of a bill which will, I am convinced, do much to restore the Tweed to its ancient populousness. Although a few clean salmon should be got during the months of September and October, along with the natural breeders of the season, which is the case in Tweed, Tay, Spey, Ness, Shin, etc.,

that does not constitute these late rivers, neither does it justify laws that permit the large number of dark, foul, and bagged fish on the very brink of the spawning beds, to be slaughtered for the sake of the few clean salmon that are found there at that late season of the year. These are the points that too often mislead our legislators, when they attempt to legislate for the good of salmon fisheries in general. One comes forward and says,—Mine is a late river; no salmon enter it earlier than May; another says, no salmon enter my river earlier than June; and if the same laws apply to us that regulate such and such rivers, we do not get justice. But neither legislators nor fishery-proprietors take the 'real state of the matter into right consideration, for it is nature alone that has fixed the right time for beginning and closing these rivers, and legislators, if they do what is right and necessary, will fix these periods at the exact time pointed out by nature; and there is not the least difficulty in doing that, for all who have given the smallest consideration to the state of matters as now existing, see it clearly. Various rivers which discharge their waters into the same firth or estuary are to be found, the one part giving early fish and the other not. The Shin, which falls into the Kyle of

Sutherland at Invershin, four miles above Bonar Bridge, will produce clean salmon during all the winter months, while the River Carron, which falls into the same Kyle at Bonar Bridge, gives few or no salmon earlier than May; and yet the salmon on Carron are equally early at the spawning-beds with those of Shin. We could multiply instances of the very same nature over all the districts of Scotland, which shows plainly the impropriety of giving various open and close times to various localities. I discard all the absurdities about various close times encouraging poaching on a close river when another river in the same locality is allowed to be fished. What I insist on is, that, as the salmon on nearly all our Scottish rivers are foul and spawn nearly about the same time, the law should continue to close all these rivers at the same time, notwithstanding one river producing early salmon and another not; but, at the same time, allow rivers that produce early salmon to open at the time suitable to these rivers.

As we mentioned above, Laxford is one of the short-seasoned rivers, yet, notwithstanding, during its season it is the second best river for angling in the county, and has always been held in high repute. It issues from Loch

Stack, and the distance from its issue to where it falls into an arm of the sea, called Loch Laxford, is only about three miles. But in the course of these three miles there are twelve excellent fishing-pools, wherein the hooking of salmon requires no great adept, they are so numerous. Sea trout of a fine size, some of them four or five pounds weight, are abundant here, and rise well to the fly. Although it is not the first river in the county for salmon, it is undoubtedly far superior to all others for its number and quality of sea trout, and on the whole is a river where, during three months in the year, first-rate sport can be got. To be sure, salmon can be hooked and killed readily after the middle of August here, but after that time, nine out of every ten that are killed are foul fish, and many of them at that time have the jaw-hook large and turned up.

Loch Stack, the source of the Laxford river, has been always celebrated for angling; indeed it is far superior to any loch of its size in the North, if not in Scotland. There is no obstruction in the river to prevent sea trout ascending with ease; and the numbers of them that ascend and enter the loch are unprecedented. With these, and fine trout, the natural inhabitants of the loch and its feeders, the sport that can be obtained here during all

the summer months is really admirable. You may kill and carry away day after day, and yet the Stack remains unexhausted and undiminished; for new shoals ascend the river with the flowing tides, and continue to do so all the summer months. A species of the *Salmo ferox* and char are also caught here; and I must say that, both as to number and variety, the sport can nowhere be surpassed. Loch More is but a small distance from Loch Stack. A little above Loch More we have Loch Markland, the source of the river Shin. In both these lochs excellent sport can be got, for they both abound with large trout, little inferior to some species of sea trout. On the whole, but few districts in the Highlands can be selected where sport to the angler is more varied and abundant. If weather set in very dry and bright, so that the salmon in the river get dull and saucy, as they often do in such weather, the angler need only proceed to one or other of these famous lochs, which are a never-failing source of amusement; and if trout appear saucy to the fly (I shall not venture to recommend one fly more than another, for I am quite aware that all anglers have their own tastes, and "every crow thinks its own bird white"), I certainly would recommend Brown of Aberdeen's phantom



minnow, as it is very capable of raising *Salmo ferox*, sea trout, or river trout; in fact, I find it suitable for all the fresh-water lochs in the North where it has been tried. Rhiconich Inn is only six miles from Laxford Bridge. The rivers and these famous lochs could be fished either from there or from Scourie Inn. A mail-car leaves Scourie on the mornings of Wednesday and Saturday for Lairg and Golspie, passing Laxford Bridge, Stack Lodge, Loch Stack, Loch More, Loch Markland, and Loch Griam. The conveyance arrives at Overskick Inn (the half-way house between Scourie and Lairg), whence it takes its course down Loch Shin side to Lairg, and thence to Golspie or Tain, as passengers may incline. This must be a pleasant drive to an angler in a fine summer day, for in the whole course of the road he scarcely ever loses sight of a loch or a river, and often sees both, with immense numbers of trout rising, and pulling down the heather-bred insects.

The salmon-fishing on the Laxford river is at present let to a sportsman for the season, along with the famous deer-forest of Stack.

#### IV.—RIVER INSHARD.

This river is close to Rhiconich Inn. Its length is not above two miles. It issues from

Loch Garbet Beg, and falls into Loch Inshard, which is a beautiful arm of the Atlantic, running several miles into the country, surrounded by bold and picturesque-looking rocks, among which the grey-bearded goat is seen winding its way over precipices to man impassable. Some three miles down this loch side, by an excellent road, we arrive at Kinlochbervie, where there is an excellent and comfortable inn, an Established and a Free Church, and by the appearance of the numerous cottages, there are people enough to fill both. However, we may just say that the inhabitants in this beautiful district are both like their meat and their work. To see them landing in the little nature-formed creeks during the herring fishing, they appear as fleet as the roe and as nimble as the goats that are seen feeding among the trackless rocks which overhang this beautiful arm of the sea. A drive from Rhiconich Inn to Old Shores down this beautiful road will certainly repay the time lost to the visitor.

The river in its course is rough and rapid ; and although numbers of salmon and sea trout ascend, particularly when the rivers are flooded, there are but few resting pools, and the greater part of the fish run on to Loch Garbet Beg, where by the month of July they are collected

in great numbers, and excellent sport, both of salmon and sea trout, can be got, particularly with a breeze of wind through the day, and Brown's phantom in a calm evening from sunset till dark. There are various other lochs in connection with Loch Garbet Beg, the waters of which, though fine mountain streams, are feeders to this loch, which produces a more regular supply to the river. In all this chain of lochs, and in many others among the hills, excellent sport among the trout is certain; and what makes the sport more sure is, that few know that these lochs exist, or that anything like such fine sport can be got in this locality; and on that account they remain undisturbed, with the trout roaming at ease, breeding, growing, and feeding, until now the lochs are crowded with these inhabitants. I would therefore advise anglers whose fancy is for light sport and plenty of it, to spend a week in the neighbourhood of Rhiconich. They will find good accommodation and attention at the inn, and abundance of sport in the lochs.

The river Inshard is at present retained in the hands of the noble owner, the Duke of Sutherland.

## V.—GRUDIE.

In proceeding eastward from Rhiconich Inn, the road leads over a high bleak moor of several miles, in the middle of which a house was erected to shelter benighted travellers who might happen to go that way during stormy weather. This house is known by the name of the Gualin House. On one of the gables of the house a large slab of stone is placed, with an inscription stating the time and by whom the road was made and the house erected, and for what purpose. Near the house there is an excellent well of spring water, with an erection over it, which is kept in good repair at the expense of the Duke of Sutherland, for the benefit of travellers who pass that way; and the well must be as welcome to the traveller during the scorching heats of summer, as the Gualin House is to the benighted traveller during the storms of winter. I would therefore recommend this interesting place to the notice of all travellers and tourists who may pass this way. Proceeding onward from Gualin a few miles, we arrive at the river Grudie. In early history, we find the name of this river Duirness, and now we again find the name of this river changed to Dionard. But I am not convinced that it is paying the

respect due to the memory of the good, great, and ancient Earls of Sutherland, to change the once familiar names used here, and in many other places in this county, particularly when the ancient names would still be more becoming than many meaningless expressions which we now hear. However, be that as it may, we here give the three names that have been given to this river, so as to prevent strangers thinking them three different rivers, when they are only a trinity of names to the one river.

We are now to the east of Cape Wrath ; and although not very numerous, we have salmon earlier than on the west coast. Some years ago, when standing on the bank of the river where it falls into the Kyle of Duirness, I saw an excellent salmon leave the tide-way and go up the river in the middle of December. The river was in fine *sighting* size ; and had I had time to spare, I am convinced I should have seen a few followers, as salmon scarcely at any season leave the sea alone when undisturbed. The river issues from Loch Diarnard, which is situated among the forest hills, and falls into the top of the Kyle of Duirness, three miles to the west of Durine Inn. The lower part of the river consists of deep, slow, and sluggish pools, and runs slow

unless the water is high in flood ; but these slow deep pools are just what the salmon like in the early part of the year ; and when the wind blows fresh, they rise very well to the fly ; but at this time, unless the river be very low, the flies require to be double the size required in summer. As the season advances, the fish leave the lower pools and *wear* slowly upwards, where they arrive at fine rushing, rattling pools and streams, the delight of the fish in the summer months, as well as the certainly successful spots for the angler. From the 1st of May to the 1st of August, salmon seldom rest in the low pools, or, if they do, it is only for a short time ; but during all that time, the upper pools will be found to produce fish abundantly, and the angler should lose but little time on the lower part of the river.

The Kyle of Duirness is an arm of the North Sea, which goes several miles inland, and is much frequented by salmon, particularly during the summer months. On a sand-bank three miles down the Kyle, dozens of seals may be seen resting at low-water, and the salmon sporting and leaping in all directions. On the right or south side of this Kyle, we see the most beautiful hills, perhaps, in Scotland ; but I <sup>ad</sup>vents, there is nothing to compare with

them to the north of Fifeshire. Here you have no heather, and but few rocks. How beautiful to see these high and lofty hills as green as a meadow to the very top! At the base of these beautiful hills of Duirness lie the fine plains of Balnakeel and Keoldale. At Balnakeel stood at one time the ancient Castle of Durines, a retreat of the family of Mackay of Tongue, when they held that parish from the Earl of Sutherland for services done, but held it only as long as the Earl allowed them to do so. At Balnakeel stands a very ancient church and churchyard, in the latter of which is to be seen a neat small monument over the grave of Rob Don, the Gaelic poet, whose birth-place is still pointed out on the north side of the Kyle. Durine Inn is situated a little to the south of Balnakeel, and three miles from the mouth of the Grudie River. The inn is large and comfortable, and well attended to by Mrs. Ross, the present occupant; and anglers intending to fish the Grudie have only a very pleasant walk between the inn and the river.

In proceeding onward a little from the inn, on the left, we reach the famous Cave Smoo, with its subterraneous lake. The cave is a remarkable excavation facing the sea, and formed out of the solid limestone rock. The bottom of the cave is perfectly dry at low water, but

when the tide flows it can only be approached by a boat. The height of the entrance to this wondrous work of nature is 53 feet, and above the entrance there are 27 feet of precipitous rock, making the whole height from the summit to the sea 80 feet. The depth of the cave is 200 feet, and its width from side to side is 110 feet. On the west side an open arch of about 15 feet high by 8 or 10 feet broad, leads to an inner cavern, to enter which, we must go over a ledge or barrier of rock 6 feet high, behind which is a deep pool of water, part of which runs over this ledge of rock. This cavern can only be explored by a boat and torch light, for without torch or candles we are in utter darkness, and can see nothing; but when once fairly embarked on the lake, by the aid of the torch, we find we are under a high vaulted roof; and as we proceed onward we find two openings in the roof: one is perfectly dry and sheds a dim light on the water below; the other admits the water of a hill-burn, which, foaming down with a disagreeable noise, the height of nearly one hundred feet, falls into the subterraneous pit, where the water is kept in perpetual movement. The length of this inner cavern is 70 feet, and the breadth upwards of 30 feet; the depth of the water here has not yet been found, but is sup-



posed to be lower than the bottom of the sea outside, from which it doubtless, in some shape or other, derives its continual supply. From this we find a third cavern proceeding further into the bowels of the earth, which enters from the west side of the cataract, and which entrance resembles very much in shape the two formerly mentioned, but the ledge of rock at the entrance here is higher than the others. This inner cavern is a region of utter darkness. Its height varies from 40 to 12 feet; breadth from 8 to 12 feet; length upwards of 100 feet. Near the extremity of this cave is a pool of great depth, seeming to have connection with the water of the other caves, or with the sea without; but the slight explorations that have yet taken place in this most wonderful work of nature, give only an imperfect idea of what may be discerned if properly explored under the superintendence of some enterprising naturalist. The traditions of the country give various accounts of these most extraordinary caverns. One is, that the Hon. Captain Donald Mackay went the distance of two miles on one of the subterraneous lakes, and he found no end of the lake, but that farther the torches refused to burn, which caused his return. A superstition of the country was, that these caverns were inhabited

by spirits, who, for reasons unknown, have now left these abodes; but when Captain Donald Mackay was at the extremity of his exploration, he heard a cock crowing still in the distance, which of course led many of the natives, yet addicted to the dregs of superstition, to believe that these caverns are approaches to some unknown country. I am aware that the slight description I have given of this wonderful work of nature does not belong altogether to fishing a river, but I know as well that the pointing out of such curiosities is very agreeable to anglers, the greater part of whom are admirers of nature in all her different phases. On the whole, Duirness Inn is a delightful summer residence for sportsmen, with the fine river Grudie only three miles distant, abundance of seal shooting on the beautiful Kyle, and inexhaustible wonders of scenery all around.

Proceeding eastward from Duirness Inn, we pass the house and shop of Mr. Murdo Lowe, erected near Cave Smoo. Mr. Lowe is an industrious and useful countryman, a general dealer and fish-curer, who, by purchasing the spoils of the fishermen, and supplying them with necessaries, has been found to stimulate these industrious and hard-toiling natives very much. We arrive at Rispond, on Loch Eriboll,

after passing a stupendous and beautiful face of rocks, and a number of small cottages occupied by a veteran and hardy race of fishermen; and I cannot pass here without remarking on the kindness and civility shown to strangers by the occupants of this hamlet. They are indeed, as a race, without guile. This is a fish-curing station, with a neat pier and very safe harbour. But here, as in many other places on this coast, nature has certainly done her share of the work. The place is completely surrounded with bare sea-worn rock, which at some age of the world had been smoothed by the mighty rushing of the North Sea over the promontory known as Farout-head. The earth and herbage have been completely washed away, and nothing left but the worn rocks. Yet the sight is grand in the extreme; and to contemplate what that place had once been, and the intentions of nature in reducing it to that bare but beautiful state, give ample opportunities for meditation.

On leaving Rispond, the road leads southward along the shore of Loch Eriboll. This is an arm of the North Sea that runs about twelve miles up the country, and forms one of the finest harbours in Scotland. When the spectator stands at the top of the loch and looks seaward, the loch is so completely surrounded

with high mountains that it appears an inland lake. The hills here are beautifully mingled with rocks and heather, and during summer are pleasant to look upon. On reaching the top of the loch, we pass the farm-house of Eriboll, occupied by Mr. Alexander Clarke, and down a short distance from the top, on the right side of the loch, we arrive at Heilim Inn, being the first inn or house of refreshment after leaving Duirness Inn, a distance of more than twenty miles. However, here we have a comfortable house, clean, and well attended, with plenty of good mutton, and fresh herrings in their season. A ferry-boat crosses between Heilim and Ardneachdie, on the west or left sides of the loch. The ferry being about two miles broad, in fine weather travellers often prefer it to making a circuit of the loch. On leaving Heilim, and proceeding three miles onward on the road to Tongue, we arrive at the River Hope, which river is crossed by a chained boat, that carries carriages and horses.

The salmon-fishing on the Grudie river is retained by the Duke.

## VI.—RIVER HOPE.

This river rises in the deer-forest of Strathmore, and strengthened by the waters from

various lochs and burns, forms the River Strathmore, which, during wet weather when the river is flooded, produces fair angling, particularly in the grilse season. A change of sport is thus afforded to parties whose wearied limbs sometimes prevent them following the deer. The river Hope winds its way through Glenmore, until at last it falls into Loch Hope, whence the river receives its supply of salmon, grilse, and sea trout. Loch Hope is a beautiful sheet of water, in which angling can be prosecuted with great success. Here are abundance of salmon, sea and river trout of various sizes, from the whittling of half a pound to the large loch trout of ten pounds. Nothing is wanting here to produce a splendid day's sport but a few clouds and a small breeze of wind. The fish are here already, indeed they are always here, and a good angler will soon learn the killing day. The loch is surrounded by fine picturesque mountains, and the lofty Ben Hope stands forth at least 2000 feet above the level of the sea—certainly an admirable mountain, with all the fine scenery at its base. The River Hope issues from Loch Hope, and after descending little more than a mile through a rough and rocky course, it falls into the right side of Loch Eriboll. Great numbers of salmon ascend thus far; but from its rapid

course all the way down from this, there are but few good angling pools, and the fish in general push forward until they reach the loch, where, as we stated above, excellent sport may be got. Anglers who intend fishing the river and loch can have good accommodation at Heilim Inn, and for a short time they may put up at the house at Casheldhu, where they are near the loch; but if they wish a supply for the pocket-flask, they must provide themselves before leaving the inn at Heilim, as nothing of that sort can be got up the strath.

On proceeding onward from the River Hope to Tongue, a distance of seven and a half miles, the road goes over what at one time was a dangerous moss and boggy hill, where travelling, during winter or the night-time, was impossible. This road was made at an enormous expense, as the greater part of it had to be founded on wood, carried from long distances on men's shoulders. About the middle of this bleak hill there is a house erected, called the Moin House, meaning the house on the moss. This house is similar to the Guilen House situated on the hill between Rhiconich and the River Grudie, and has a large slab on one of the gables, with an inscription engraved on it, stating the nature of the hill, by whom the

road was made, and who were the managers of the Sutherland property at that time. After passing this hill, we arrive at the Kyle of Tongue, a beautiful arm of the sea, surrounded at its mouth by numerous islands, known as the Rabbit Islands. This kyle is much frequented by salmon and other fish of the salmon kind, and they take a turn through this pleasant water as a rest from the violence of the turbulent North Sea, when on the way to their native rivers. A small river from the hills, called the Kinloch Water, falls into the upper end of the kyle, and here sea-trout and grilse are often caught, and many are seen playing near the mouth of the stream, when its water is too low for large fish to enter. Tongue has to be reached from this side by means of a ferry-boat, and an ugly troublesome ferry it is, as the boat can only cross at certain times of the tide, and travellers have to stand many hours, with cold feet and blue noses, waiting the tide. I hope at some time this difficulty will be remedied by extending a road round the top of the kyle. This would have been impossible to do in the days of General Wade, but it is perfectly practicable by the Duke of Sutherland. When once over this difficult kyle, we arrive at the House of Tongue, once the principal residence of the Lords of Reay. The house is built in

a fine romantic spot, close to the sea. It is surrounded with fine old trees, and well sheltered, and the sight of it recalls to mind the feudal times that are now happily gone by; but, excepting the antiquity of the house, it deserves little more praise, for it is neither in the form of ancient castles, nor in the shape of modern residences. But the situation and the ancestral trees that intermingle with the grounds, and surround the place, are much to be admired. A mile further on we arrive at Kirkiboll, a small village containing an excellent inn, a shop, a post-office, and several other houses. In the church here is the burial-place of the chiefs of the Clan MacKay, as well as of the Lords of Reay. On the hill above Kirkiboll, over which the road passes from this spot, we have an exceedingly fine view of the Kyle of Tongue on the west, Ben Hope to the south-west, and Ben Loyal to the south; nothing can exceed this view in August, when the gold tinge of the heather overspreads these mighty mountains, and the mists of the valley lie like snow-flakes below. A few miles further on, the road, by a stone bridge, crosses the River Borgie.

The salmon-fishing of the Hope is in the Duke's own hands.



## VII.—RIVER BORGIE.

This is a small river running from Loch Slam, which loch receives the waters of Loch Craggie and Loch Loyal. In dry weather few fish get up, although there is a productive salmon fishing at its mouth, close to the sea. In rainy weather, when the river is flooded, numbers of salmon run up the river, particularly grilse and sea trout, during June and July. After such floods, and until such time as the river again falls in, fair angling is got in some pools of the river, and at these times salmon take well in Loch Slam. That loch also produces sea trout, and an excellent quality of fresh-water trout. Loch Craggie, on this chain of lakes, also produces excellent sport. The trout are abundant, and the quality good. The *Salmo ferox* is also got here by trolling, which I may mention is also a successful mode of fishing for the smaller-sized trout. The next in this chain of lochs is Loch Loyal, situated on the east side, and at the base of the lofty Ben Loyal. This is a beautiful and picturesque loch of several miles, and dotted here and there with green islands. The road from Aultnaharra to Tongue only separates the loch from the base of this huge and towering mountain; and the drive here, among sweet-

smelling natural birches, and by the smooth placid side of the loch, is nothing behind the Birks of Aberfeldy or the Falls of Moness. Here we have trout of all sorts and sizes, from the ferocious *Salmo ferox* of many pounds weight, down to the gentle finnock of half a pound. This is just the situation in which such fish may be looked for, for the birches, grass, and heather produce insects in abundance, which are daily bred and are daily falling into the loch, where these trout are always ready to feed on them, as soon as they fall on the surface of the water. This loch produces excellent sport, and anglers should never pass it without wetting the line, as it can be easily reached from Tongue by an excellent road, or what in summer is still more pleasant to a tourist-angler, by following the course of the Borgie river, along this chain of lochs, sometimes among bogs and burns, and other times among rocks, and brushing the heather-bells, which never fail to be fascinating to the rod-in-hand tourist. By this river side, and on the coast of the North Sea, stands out in bold array the castle of Borgie (or rather Borwe, which was the name then in use), one of the seats of the Clan MacKay. I cannot conceive how so many of the fine, ancient, and appropriate names of places in the north have been

changed into modern meaningless phrases, and I am sure it adds no splendour to the situations, and detracts much from the associations. But I am glad to see that, in the course of the last half century, a certain falling back on the old names has taken place. In proceeding onward from Borgie, passing a number of small cottages, we arrive at the famous River Naver, which river is crossed by a very convenient and well-attended chain boat.

The salmon-fishing of the Borgie is in the Duke's own hands.

#### VIII.—RIVER NAVER.

This is a fine large river, by far the largest on the west or north coast of Sutherland. It runs from Loch Naver, a beautiful sheet of water seven miles long, situated at the north-east base of Ben Clibrick, and after winding its way through one of the most beautiful straths in Sutherland for the space of eighteen miles, falls into Naver Bay on the North Sea, at Bettyhill Inn. It is one of what we call long-seasoned rivers; for before the introduction of shortening the time of fishing by Home Drummond's Act, many excellent salmon were caught here in December. But that unfortunate act, which has been the bane of all

early rivers, has deprived the Naver of two months of its most valuable fishing time, and in return has given it nothing; for the fish here are reduced in quantity by the middle of August, which turns this early and valuable river into a short season (why should these things exist?)—yet, notwithstanding the reduction of the season, the fishing here, both in spring and summer, is good. There are many fine angling and resting pools in the river, and as fish run early, spring angling is sure to produce fair sport. But the pleasure-seeking angler cannot enjoy the sport at this early season, when the mountain tops are clad with snow, and the valleys frost-bound; of course I speak of those who continually keep themselves in “too warm a climate;” “muffled cats catch nae mice.” In summer the highland midges fix on and eat their tender faces, which is even more unendurable than the biting frost. To prevent the midges’ bites as much as possible, gauze veils should be worn by the anglers; but the hardy guide or gilly is proof against these little crosses of human nature.

During summer, when the weather is favourable, and the river in proper size, excellent angling sport may be relied on; and this river, from the size of the loch, its feeder, and other sources, continues longer in good angling trim

than most of the northern rivers; but in very dry, sunny, sultry weather, the angler here, as well as on all other rivers in similar cases, must submit to days of little sport, as well as blank days, with nothing but a pleasant walk, which still adds to the health and the appetite. When the river is in that low state we mention, there should be no mid-day fishing. The proper time then is from four to eight o'clock in the morning, and from six to ten o'clock at night; and during that state of water, the evening *toddy* should be debarred, and good spring water substituted in its place, for *toddy* has never been a friend to early rising.

The Millart from Loch Curr also falls into the Naver in its course down the strath. This is a nice little river; and during June and July affords good sport of grilse and sea-trout. Loch Curr, from which it proceeds, also gives excellent sport. The burn or water of Skelpich also falls into the Naver about three or four miles above the ferry. This stream also yields good trout fishing, with an excellent quality of trout. There are various other large burns that fall into the Naver in its course down the strath. These burns, and also the lochs from whence they flow, abound with excellent trout. In fact, such a river for sport, along with these tributaries, is

seldom to be met with in any part of Scotland.

Loch Naver is an excellent sheet of water, as we said, above seven miles long, and nearly two miles broad, with two rivers, feeders, at the top, and several large burns from the hills on each side. Salmon ascend these rivers at the top in breeding time; and those which do not chance to fall to the leister of the poacher, spawn successfully. It is just such streams as these that salmon like in the spawning time; and in these small streams the breeding operations are most successful, because the fish can at all times deposit their seed in the middle of the stream, where their beds have no chance of getting dry. Therefore, these small rivers should at all times have the river-watcher's best attention and care. Loch Naver abounds with salmon, grilse, sea-trout, and the various kinds of loch and river trout that are bred in its feeders. All these congregate in this fine loch, and at all times first-rate sport is afforded to the angler. We say at all times, because the river may at times get too low for that purpose, but the loch never gets too low for angling. To be sure, a very clear, calm day will not give such success as a day with clouds flying between us and the sun—what anglers call a sunny-and-dark-day; but there is seldom

a day from morning to night but what this loch will afford good sport. Trolling with the minnow here will be found successful in the evenings.

Altnaharra Inn is situated at the top of Loch Naver, on the road from Lairg to Tongue, by which a mail car goes to Tongue on Mondays and Thursdays, and returns on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This conveyance will be found convenient to sportsmen who intend visiting this inland lake. I say inland, because the situation is twenty-one miles from Lairg and nineteen from Tongue. Bettyhill is situated near the foot of the river Naver, and is a good and comfortable inn kept by Mrs. Munro. These two inns, Altnaharra and Bettyhill, are the only inns from which the river or Loch Naver can be fished. Very good lodgings can be got in either of them; but in spring, Bettyhill is the most suitable for the river, because the greater part of the fish during the spring months are to be found among the lower pools, for salmon never run far up earlier than the 1st of May; and any that may ascend higher always return when frost sets in. After the 1st of May, and during the summer, salmon will be got in the upper parts of the river better than in the low pools: for at that time they only remain in the lower

pools to rest for a short time, and then move on towards the loch, where they gather together in great numbers. Towards the breeding time, part of them ascend the small rivers at the top of the loch, and part fall back into the river, where they have ample gravel banks and shallows well adapted for breeding purposes.

The mighty Ben Clibrick overlooks Loch Naver—in summer with its golden tinges from the blooming heather, and in winter and spring with its snow-clad summit and sides. Ben Clibrick stands majestically about the middle of the county, 3000 feet high, and it far overtops all the other Sutherland hills. From its summit, in a favourable day, can be seen the German Ocean, the North Sea with the Orkney Islands, and the Atlantic with the Western Isles. The name of this fine mountain has, like many other places of note here, also undergone a change, I shall not say for the better, for the ancient name of “Binchli-brig” is certainly a far more majestic and dignified name than its present cutty-sark-like expression of Ben Clibrick, and sounds much sweeter to the ear. Strath Naver is one of the finest straths in Sutherland, beautified at intervals by fine patches of natural birch wood, which we find peculiar to many of the other sweet straths in Sutherland. This strath, from



top to bottom, is about twenty-five miles long ; with its fine grassy hills and the majestic river winding through, is certain to be admired by every lover of natural scenery.

After leaving the Naver, we pass Bettyhill Inn. Onwards we have a good deal of muir-land, which does not appear too steep for cultivation. The surface, however, appears mossy, which I have no doubt, at a considerable outlay and perseverance, might in course of time be made fertile. Great numbers of small tenants occupy part of these grounds ; but their mode of farming the small patches under cultivation seems much behind what we meet with in other parts of the county. And yet, to look at these patches, the quality of the ground seems not so ungenial as to prevent fair crops. The sea-coast here is rocky and bold. Strathy Head, a very remarkable point, stretches a long way out to sea, from which we have a fine view of the rocky coast on both sides. A small stream called the River Strathy falls into the bay eastward of this point ; and although a good number of salmon are netted at its mouth, close to the sea, it is too small to be considered an angling stream. After the river is flooded for some time, however, grilises and sea-trout find their way up, and are caught with the fly. If anglers passing that

way should find the river in that state, it would not be amiss to throw a fly over the most likely pools; perchance a few grilse or sea-trout may not be able to withstand the temptation, for certainly it would be the first flies they have seen since they left their salt-water residence. This river falls in so fast that the fish in the pools need not attempt to get forward, and they find it impossible to return; therefore, as soon as the river gets low, they must become an easy prey to whoever is lucky enough to go the way first, and I have no doubt but that time will be sharply looked after. We now arrive at Melvich Inn, a fine large house, and well kept by Mr. William Telford, the active innkeeper. From the inn we have in view part of the Halladale River.

The Naver, both river and loch, are let to a sportsman.

#### IX.—RIVER HALLADALE.

This is a fine little river. Although much less than Naver, a great number of salmon run up. It rises in the heights of Kildonan, and winding its course down a beautiful strath for twenty miles, it falls into the sea at Big-house Bay. This is the farthest east river on

the north coast belonging to the Duke of Sutherland. In the first five miles from the mouth of the river, there are about a dozen of excellent fishing pools; but as the strath through which the river runs is somewhat level, the river requires a fair supply of water or a fresh breeze of wind to give first-rate sport; and this cannot be always depended on in any river where the principal sources of water are hill burns, and collections from small lochs; but yet it often happens here, that the river runs in that desired trim, for the collection of water from such a long strath is not nearly so soon exhausted as in a short-running river; and therefore, when once the river is in right trim, it continues so for a considerable time. Throughout the upper parts of the river there are also good pools, some of them with rocky bottoms, in which the salmon take the fly well towards the latter end of the season. Grilises and sea-trout are caught here successfully from the first of June to the middle of August, and numbers of brown fish may be got here even later in the season than that. On the lower pools, even when the river is low, cross-lines may be used in the evening with success. I am aware that many object to this mode of fishing. I would do so also, when the river was in that state that fish

could be caught otherwise ; but in cases when the river happens to be unfishable in the usual way, I cannot altogether object to it.

Say that an angler chances to be residing at Melvich Inn, when a few weeks of dry weather set in. In a short time the river gets into that low state that fish in the usual way will not look at the fly. He is aware that the river is perfectly full of fish, and a new supply running up every tide. What is he to do ? In the first place, he proceeds to the hill lochs, which are a source of never-failing sport, where he fills creel after creel day after day ; and although he is perfectly aware that "sma' fish are better than nae fish," in the course of a few days he gets tired of that slaughtering work, and longs to have another tilt with one of the monarchs of the flood. The dry weather and bright sun continue day after day. He visits the barometer, his first work in the morning ; he finds it firm on "set fair." He anxiously looks for the gathering clouds and a change of wind ; but unless it is calm altogether, the wind blows from north-west, and has no appearance of change. He gets fidgety and fretty ; in fact, the fine, pleasant, easy-to-please gentleman, when the river was in good trim, has as completely changed as the weather. The beef-steak that

was first-rate, and the best he ever tasted, is now over-done or under-done ; he never saw such bad cooks. Donald and the other man down stairs made such a noise last night, that he never closed an eye ; and the landlord gets a civil hint, that if the like happens again, the case would be represented to the good Duke, who would make short work with him. The landlord tells him that Donald and the other man left the house long before he went to bed, and it must have been the cock crowing in the hen-house that he heard ; and rather than trouble the good Duke, if he pleased, he would kill the cock, if the hens should all go a "gouk hunting." These and similar scenes happen at all angling inns in course of dry weather ; but one day of south-west wind and rain puts all these things to rights ; and then the last sheep that Donald brought was the sweetest mutton he ever ate, and the salmon he killed below the ford, just beside the black stones, with the "Ondine" fly of "Ephemera," gave an hour and a quarter's first-rate sport ; the summersaults he gave were really wonderful—he believed the fish was fully twenty-five pounds. At all events, Donald the gilly was beat to put it round his head. Donald here replies, that he was sure the fish was more than thirty pounds, "and I think I never saw ane but your honour

that could have landed him in double the time." "Go, Donald, and tell Betsy to give you your dinner and a dram." And here the scene and the dry weather end, and the landlord keeps the best inn on the good Duke's property.

The lochs among the hills here are similar to all the other districts in the northern and western parts of the county; they are thickly inhabited with the finest trout, from half a pound up to four or five pounds weight. I am not prepared to give the exact number of fresh-water lakes in the county; but when we consider that the parish of Assynt alone contains upwards of two hundred, we may safely conclude that the total of these in the county is upwards of a thousand; and when we consider that all these fine and romantic lakes abound with fish of the finest quality, we are of the opinion that, in some age of the world, this county will be inhabited by a dense population; for as nature has made nothing in vain, we are certain that such quantities of created food as these lochs can produce will not be allowed to perish without fulfilling the intended purposes of their wise creation. The fish had the precedence of all other beasts at the creation, and were ordered to increase and multiply for the use of man, who was not yet

formed. And during the early and heathen ages of the world, fish were held in great reverence among the nations. The Old and New Testaments, which give a passing history of the world from the creation upwards, mention fish and fishing thirty-two times. The heathen gods were made after the form of a fish ; and Dagon, the great god of the Philistines, was formed partly a man, and partly a fish ; and on the whole, those that had fish ponds and fish rivers held them in great respect. Our Roman Catholic forefathers erected all their palaces and monasteries in the neighbourhood of superior fisheries, and of course we are bound to pay the same respect to the sources of so much human food, and to watch over, protect, and multiply all these as far as possible, for none of them were created in vain.

Strath Halladale is one of the many beautiful straths that are to be met with in the North, and is only second to Strath Naver for beauty and fertility. Close to the sea, on the right side of the bay, stands Bighouse (the ancient Bighous), once the seat of a branch of the Clan MacKay ; and on the left of the river, —on an elevation, from which there is an interesting view of the river, fine meadows, Bighouse, Port Skerry and the North Sea—is situated the Inn of Melvich. This is certainly

an agreeable and desirable residence for invalid anglers, for if health is to be recruited anywhere, we may look for it here, where the healing breezes from sea and land mingle around this situation, and where no exertions are needed to "snuff the caller air." As we proceed upwards, the grassy meadows look rich and luxuriant, and cowslips and violets bespangle the dell. The hills, which lie almost due south and north, are beautiful, and continue until we arrive at the boundary between Reay and Kildonan. This was once the march between the old earldom of Sutherland and the property of the Clan MacKay, and in those days the riding or settling the marches between properties was as troublesome and difficult as it has been in many cases ever since. For we find in the time of the seventh Earl John, the eighteenth Earl of Sutherland, that great meetings were held to settle the marches in this district between the Earl and the Clan MacKay; and as the latter was very much of the nature of the Emperor of Russia, who only respected a contract until he was strong enough to break it, meetings to settle the affairs of that troublesome clan had often to be resorted to. At one time Angus Mackay of Bighouse was sentenced to be imprisoned in the Castle of Dunrobin during the Earl's



pleasure; at another time the Earl kept a garrison of men at Strath Naver, something of the nature of the Black Watch, embodied by the Marquis of Breadalbane to keep the peace and prevent plunder.

There is an excellent road from Melvich up Strath Halladale and down Strath Donan to Helmsdale, the distance being  $38\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and a small inn at Auchintoul, 18 miles from Helmsdale, divides the road into two stages.

The salmon-fishing of the Halladale is in the Duke's own hands.

#### X.—RIVER DONAN, OR HELMSDALE.

This river rises in the heights of Kildonan, not far from the source of the river Halladale. Its first origin is from several lakes among the hills in that locality, and as it proceeds downward it receives the drainage of the side glens and burns from various lochs, and, gathering strength as it goes, it winds its way through this lovely strath, until it falls into the sea at Helmsdale village. The whole length of the river, from its source to the sea, is about eighteen miles; but a considerable part of it near the top, where the stream is but small, is much frequented by salmon, only in the latter end of the season, and

towards the spawning time. Some of these will take the fly; but at that season, and after resting for weeks, if not months, the fish are inferior, and more fit for breeding than for eating. This is an early river, and during a fair supply of water good angling is got as early as February, particularly among the lower pools; but although there be no fall or other obstruction to prevent them, salmon never run high up the river sooner than the month of May. In dry weather, this river suffers from that effect sooner than rivers that are supplied with water from large lakes; but as soon as rain falls among the hills, its rise is more rapid, and for a few days after a flood the angling is very good; and although the angling is best in the low part of the river during the spring months, in the summer months it is better higher up, as at that time the fish run up, and only rest for a short time in the low pools, while in spring they never incline farther than the lower pools of the river. Therefore, if the river be in good trim, the one part or the other will afford good sport either in spring or summer. The river is of a good angling size, with a plentiful supply of fish during all the fishing season, and with the exception of the drawback of too dry weather, is a river much to be recommended.

The strath appears an excellent pleasure drive. The village of Helmsdale is situated on the north side of the river mouth at its junction with the sea, and at the south base of a fine green hill. The village has sprung into existence since the year 1814, and has now attained a considerable size, with regular laid-out streets, and fine buildings. We cross the river by a stone bridge close to the village. At the north end of the bridge stands a large and commodious inn, well fitted up for the accommodation of anglers and travellers. Various shops, curing-yards, and private residences neatly fitted up, with nice gardens, add much to the beauty of the place. There are also an Established and Free kirk, with manses suitable for the clergy, in the village, and at the river mouth, a pier and excellent harbour for ships of light burden. During the season of herring-fishing, all here is bustle and activity. There are such multitudes of people gathered together, that were it not for the systematic way in which their business is carried on, by all knowing their own places, a stranger would be apt to say that the place was all bustle and confusion.

On the south side of the river, stand the ruins of the old castle of Helmsdale (ancient name, Helmisdaill), which was built by Lady

Margaret Baillie, Countess of Sutherland, during her widowhood, about the year 1488. It was demolished by her son, Earl John, and again rebuilt by her, who afterwards left it, and resided at West Gartay. In the year 1587, a diabolical tragedy happened in this castle. It was then occupied by Isabel Sinclair, wife of Gilbert Gordon of Gartay, who was next heir to the Earldom of Sutherland, failing John the fifteenth Earl, and his son Alexander. When the Earl, the Countess, and their only son were there on a visit, Isabel Sinclair poisoned the Earl and Countess, but the son who was out hunting (along with John, Isabel Sinclair's son, whom she intended to be Earl of Sutherland) escaped, and the poison that was prepared for him was, through some mistake, given to John, her own son, who also died. If the ruins of these old castles could tell their own history, what a catalogue of crime and barbarism would be displayed. As you pass these dumb and silent ruins, it is impossible to avoid reflecting on the scenes of cruelty which happened within them, even among the nearest relations; and feeling grateful that days of more security to life and property have taken their place—for in those days the man with the best sword and the most followers was master of the

property. As we pass on from Helmsdale to Brora, a distance of about thirteen miles, two and a half miles from Helmsdale, we arrive at Port Gower, a neat little village with a comfortable inn, but being so near Helmsdale, it is not so much frequented by travellers as the comforts of the inn deserve. There are numbers of neat cottages in the neighbourhood, occupied principally by fishers, who, judging by appearance, make a comfortable living from the sea. They are stout fine-looking fellows. On the left, we pass the fine arable farm of Crackik, which, with a high steep hill to the north of it, looks like some of the farms in Dumfriesshire. A little farther on, we pass the church and manse of Loth, and then, at a quick and unnecessarily sharp turn of the road, we cross the water of Loth, a rapid hill stream. At one time the waters of this stream overflowed the greater part of the low lands of Loth, and indeed the most of that fine valley; but in the year 1605, Earl John, the seventeenth Earl of Sutherland, cut a straight passage to the river, from the hill to the sea, thereby reclaiming all that fine land. After passing the farms of Kintrodwell, we enter a large plain, occupied both right and left by small tenants, who have nice fertile and well-cultivated lots of land, for

which they only pay nominal rents. Here we have another specimen of the fine Highlanders,—and “the lasses” especially are well worth looking at. We now arrive at Brora Bridge. This is a neat and substantial stone bridge, and was the only one in the county as late as 1800. Its erection must be of a very old date, for we find it stated, that it was altogether decayed in the year 1619, and in that year was repaired by Sir Robert Gordon, the historian of Sutherland.

The salmon-fishing in the Helmsdale is at present let on lease to a sportsman.

## XI.—RIVER BRORA.

This is a nice small river. Although a much less body of water than the river Helmsdale, it produces a larger number of salmon. In part this is to be accounted for by the Brora proceeding from a loch of considerable size, which continues the temperature of the water several degrees higher than rivers that are entirely fed from the produce of the hills. The river takes its source from the south-east base of Ben Clibrick, in the very middle of the county. It is remarkable that from the base of this fine mountain there proceed three salmon rivers—the river

Naver from the north base, the river Brora from the south-east, and the river Terry from the south-west base. It would be interesting to have a rain-gauge placed on the summit of this hill for a whole year. It must produce an extraordinary quantity of water, for we see rain falling there when there is not a drop in the plains below, and we see the top of the mountain completely covered with snow when the low grounds are black and dry. As we said above, the river Brora has its spring at the south-east base of this mountain, after which it winds its way through glens and mosses for the space of twenty miles, and falls into Loch Brora, near Kilcolmkill. Some miles above, where it falls into the loch, it is considerably augmented by the Blackwater, that takes its course from the base of Ben Crinin. From Loch Brora to where it falls into the sea, its course is in general rocky, and with its windings, is not much above four miles. Yet notwithstanding this short course, it contains a number of excellent angling pools, and clean salmon could be caught here as early as December. Along with many other early rivers, this river suffers severely from the operations of Mr. Home Drummond's Fishery Act; for when the very finest of salmon could be got

here during the forbidden time, Dècember and January, towards the end of the present fishing season salmon become inferior. Although a good number of salmon and grilse ascend the river during the summer months, they are not in proportion to what go up in spring ; neither during summer, when the river is low, can they be equally caught with the fly. When it happens in a rainy time, or rainy season, when the river is often flooded, fair fishing can be got even in the summer time. But on the whole, the principal angling season here is from the 1st of February (during this Act) to the 1st of May ; and if the river is in good order, it may be fair to the 1st of June, but at that time at farthest. If the weather be dry, as in ordinary seasons, very good sport need not be expected, although a chance day in course of that time may happen. Towards the latter end of the season, grilse are caught in that portion of the river above the loch ; and the fish ascend to near the top of the river for the purpose of spawning ; but by the time they get high up the river, from the brown mossy colour of the water, they turn dark and inferior. Excellent fishing is also got in Loch Brora, both of salmon and grilse. The loch abounds also with sea trout, and various



kinds of fresh-water trout, from the different rivers and burns that fall into the river and loch.

The present village of Brora has principally sprung up since 1811 ; and with the exception of the bridge, we can now find no traces of antiquity. We have very early accounts of coal works and salt pans being erected there successfully ; and in the year 1345, King David Bruce erected the town of Broray into a royal borough, with the privilege of keeping four fairs in the year ; but I cannot find any accounts of the size or description of the then town of Brora, not even tradition ; but were it from nothing else than the erection of a stone bridge at that early date, when no other existed in the county, we must conclude that at that time Brora must have been a place of note. The present village is situated at the south end of the bridge, on a small elevation above the river and harbour, with a fine view of the distant hills, the German Ocean, and the coast of Morayshire. It is also a busy stirring place during the herring-fishing season. The village contains several flashy-looking shops, two good inns, a post-office, and a flesher, who I understand gets constant employment. As we pass on from Brora to

Golspie, at a short distance on the left, stands that noble-looking edifice, Dunrobin Castle. The old castle, which is still entire, is a fine specimen of ancient architecture. It was built by Robert, the second earl, about eight hundred years ago. It is situated on an elevation, one side of which appears to be artificial, with a fine exposure. Although the new part of the castle looks a princely residence, yet from its age and taste the old part is greatly to be admired. The size of the fine old trees that surround the castle tell that they have seen many years go by, and that they have been the property and admiration of many a chieftain. Soon after passing Dunrobin, we arrive at Golspie Inn, occupied and kept well by Mr. Robert Hill. The inn is large and commodious; and no man is fitter to conduct such an establishment than Mr. Hill. We now arrive at the village of Golspie, a thriving-looking place, and well guarded by an Established church at the one end and a Free church at the other, with a clean-looking street of excellent houses in the middle, containing drapers, grocers, druggists, and bakers, a branch of the British Linen Company's Bank, a branch of the Aberdeen Town and County Bank, the Parochial and Free Church schools, a watchmaker, and a

lawyer. On the right, on a small elevation, we see Rhines House, the residence of Mr. Gunn, the Duke's local factor. The house is a fine gothic-like erection ; and the factor, who has filled the situation for forty years, under three proprietors, is a general favourite. Onward we arrive at the fine farms of Culmallie and Kirtoun. Close to the road at the latter place we see an old churchyard. There have been no interments there for a long time ; but as two of the Earls of Sutherland, good men and true, were buried there in the years 1460 and 1508, we certainly regret, in this age of monuments, and when we see monuments erected to men of far less worth, that there is not a neat pillar raised to point out the resting-place of these two great earls. A little farther on, and we arrive at the Fleet Mound.

The salmon-fishing on the Brora is now in the Duke's own possession.

## XII.—RIVER FLEET.

This is a small river that rises at the western extremity of the parish of Rogart, near where it marches with the parish of Lairg. For a few miles from the top, it appears only a large burn ; but as it advances

downward, it gets greatly increased by burns from the glens and hollows on each side, and by the time it comes to Rovie and Davochbeg, it has swelled into a pretty sized river, with water enough to allow salmon and grilse to get up. This portion of the river is composed of deep pools and sharp-running streams, finely adapted for sea trout and sea-trout fishing. The lower portion of the river has its course through level and rich meadow and arable land, and the water runs slow and sluggish, which makes not the most desirable spot for a rod-fisher. However, after a flood, and with a fresh breeze of wind, and clouds, fair sport can be got. A great number of salmon go up this river in the latter part of the season. *And they might be greatly increased*, for the breeding-ground is very good, and plenty of it. The river runs below a stone bridge in the famous Fleet Mound, and falls into a shallow estuary, which is little more than sand banks at low-water, but at high-water the tide flows to a considerable distance up the river, and of course the fish run up with it; but if the river be in a very low state at the time, part of the fish are sure to return with the ebbing tide, particularly in June and July. About a mile down the estuary, at a point near Skelbo

Castle, the salmon take the fly very well in the salt-water during June, July, and part of August. This is the only spot in the kingdom that I am aware of where angling salmon has been successfully practised in salt-water. Mr. George Ross, the present tenant of Torboll in this neighbourhood, was the first to bring this salt-water spot into repute as an angling stance. He made the attempt—he caught salmon with the fly—and since that time many others have killed them there also.

The Mound, through which the river Fleet flows, is certainly one of the finest embankments in the North. It is erected right across the tide-way of the estuary, and right in the face of the flowing tide. The length of this embankment is 995 yards, exclusive of a bridge of 34 yards at the north end, which makes the whole length of the Mound 1029 yards; its width at the base 60 yards, sloping in to 20 feet at the top; and its perpendicular height 18 feet. The flow of spring tides on the Mound varies in height from 8 feet to  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The expense of the whole erection was about £9600. From the north end of this Mound an excellent road leads up the left bank of the river Fleet, through the parishes of Rogart and Lairg, to Lairg Inn and the famous Loch Shin. In the parish of

Rogart, after passing the farm of Morvich, we see a great number of small cottages, the occupiers of which also occupy small farms, varying apparently from four to ten acres of arable land; and from their aspect we conclude that the tenants live comfortably. The road to Dornoch (once Dornough) leads from the south end of the Mound (I mention the two roads by Lairg and Dornoch for the information of anglers who may visit the river Fleet), where, after a pleasant drive round remarkable hills, and through fine thriving plantations and arable farms, for about seven or eight miles, we arrive at the county town, where we find an elegant inn, occupied by Mr. Alexander Gunn, an excellent landlord, and where travellers always find peace and plenty, with a hearty welcome. We see here an Established church, or rather cathedral, an excellent and romantic-like edifice, and finely fitted up. Within this church, and in the east wing, is the burial-place of many of the ancient Earls of Sutherland, as well as the ducal family of the present day. There is also a Free church, a large and massive-looking building; a lately-built and elegantly-fitted-up court-house, with a new and substantial jail; a branch of the Caledonian Banking Company; several grocer and

drapers' shops; bakers, butchers, carpenters, and blacksmiths; a sheriff-substitute (Mr. Campbell), and a procurator-fiscal (Mr. W. S. Fraser), both general favourites. On leaving Dornoch for Bonar Bridge, we pass Clashmore Inn; a little farther on, on the left, Skibo Castle; and about five miles from Dornoch, on the right, Ospisdale House, the seat of Daniel Gilchrist, Esq., a good countryman. At about eight miles from Dornoch we pass the once flourishing Spiningdale, now almost in ruins, and the once fine buildings now inhabited by jackdaws; but time works wonders, and kingdoms and empires either flourish or decay. Two miles from Bonar Bridge we pass the parish church and manse of Criegh, the church on the left, an old malt-barn looking affair, and the manse on the right, a new and elegant-looking building, with its towers and turrets. It would have been called a castle in the days of Rynold Chyne. We now arrive at Bonar Bridge, a long straggling one-sided street, with two or three licensed whisky-shops. Travellers to the south will keep to the left to Bonar Bridge, and anglers going up the country will keep straight forward to Shin Bridge. Bonar Bridge is a fine erection. It was built in 1811, and consists of two stone

arches, 50 and 60 feet span, and an iron arch 150 feet span. The - cost of the whole erection was about £14,000. On passing from Bonar Village to Shin Bridge, half-way on the right we pass a very neat shooting-box, belonging to Mr. Dempster of Skibo, but occupied, along with the shootings, for several years past, by Sir Philip G. Egerton, M.P., an excellent angler. We now arrive at Shin Bridge and the river Shin.

The salmon-fishing on the Fleet is in the Duke's own possession.

### XIII.—RIVER SHIN.

This is the second largest river in the county, if not the largest altogether; for although the Naver near the mouth has the appearance of being a larger river, that is altogether owing to its slow course through level ground, while the Shin throughout its rapid downward course discharges the most water. From its short course between the loch and the tide-way in the Kyle of Sutherland, its temperature is several degrees higher in winter than the waters of the rivers Oykel and Cassley, with which it mingles on entering the Kyle; and the temperature is several degrees lower in summer than the waters of



these long-run, hill-collected, and sun-heated rivers. All these variations are ascertained by means of instruments at the different seasons of the year. But even without these, we see these rivers completely covered with ice in course of winter, when often no ice is seen on Shin. These changes have their due effect on salmon entering this river at the different seasons; for the acute perception of the salmon soon finds out the warm side of the estuary, and the river from which that warm water flows. It is well known that salmon, during the winter and spring months, when the water of the warmest river is cold, always run on the sunny side of the estuary, that is, as much as possible on the north side; for from the low course of the sun at that season, the sunbeams reflect strongest on the north side, and there, during that time, the run of the fish is to be found. In the summer months, that is, after the 1st of May, the fish run on the quite opposite side of the estuaries. The high temperature of the water at that time induces them to seek as much as possible to get under the cool shade of the south banks, where there is the least influence of the sunbeams. In large rivers and estuaries, it has been always found that netting has been most successful on the north side during

spring and winter, and on the south side during summer. There are many good salmon-fishing stations on all such rivers and estuaries, where no fish can be caught earlier than the 1st of May ; while just opposite such stations, the north side makes a successful spring fishing. It may be here asked, when so many salmon rivers run into the tide-way of this Kyle, what is the reason that Shin is the only river that produces early salmon ? The reason is what we have explained above, the high temperature of the Shin water in winter. That is the season that the ova are embedded among the gravel in the river ; and the hatching of the young fish is more hastened here than in other rivers of a very low temperature. The same cause affects the fish in the same proportion in all their upward stages ; and as all these rivers have their own peculiar race of fish, which return to the rivers in which they have been bred, it entirely accounts for the Shin producing early salmon, and the other rivers not.

This river issues from Loch Shin at Lairg, and in its whole course, with the windings, is only between six and seven miles long. The river may be said to be in two sections, divided by a large fall, over which the fish can ascend with considerable difficulty, but not in all sizes

of the water ; for when the river is high, with the whole water forcing through between the perpendicular rocks, the current is so strong that no fish dare to enter ; and when the river is very low, the summit of the rock over which the river flows is so high above the surface of the deep time-worn pool below, that the leap is too much to be accomplished, unless by mere accident, for many are the attempts during that size of water, but most of the fish are driven back by the strength of the spout from above. The only safe and sure chance of getting over, is when the river is in a middling size, neither high nor low, for then the first leap takes them into a sort of a whirlpool-like pot, close to the east side, where, after a short rest, they run over the summit of the rock. Scarcely any that attempt to get up at that particular spot fail ; but throughout the west side, we see part of them driven back in all sizes of the water. Their spirit of perseverance, however, is so great, that one failure never prevents them from other attempts, and many, entirely from perseverance, reach the top of the fall.

The principal angling during the spring months is from the Big Fall, as this is called, for the reason that, about a mile farther down, the river runs over a low ledge of rock, known

by the name of the Little Fall, which from appearance should be no obstruction to the fish at any season. But the spring angling, as we said above, is from the Big Fall to the mouth of the river, where it falls into the tide-way. In this section of the river there are twenty first-rate angling pools, some of which fish in the highest state, and some in the lowest state of the river; but it is something remarkable, that although to appearance the Little Fall is no obstruction to the fish at any season, the greater part of the fish never go higher up the river than the Little Fall earlier than April, whatever the size of the river may be. Even below the Little Fall, however, there are—1. The Little Fall Pool; 2. Connies; 3. Clach Dhu; 4. Clarach-beg; 5. Angus' Turn; 6. Smith's Pool; 7. Bridge; 8. Bridge Pool, on the east side; 9. Bridge Pool on the west side; 10. The Islands; 11. Hector's Land; and 12. The Garden Pool. From the Big to the Little Fall, there are—1. Big Fall Pool; 2. Culaig; 3. Pool Craggan; 4. Pool Enich; 5. Racky Stream; 6. Linguish; 7. Clarach More; 8. Piper's Pool—In all, from the Big Fall to the mouth of the river, twenty good angling pools, on none of which is it difficult to hook salmon, although the rocky shores of some of the pools make it a

little troublesome to get them into the landing-net. Salmon never attempt to go over the Big Fall earlier than the middle of May, and very often not before the beginning of June; therefore the whole unkilld fish of the season are hovering about among the pools from that to the mouth of the river, which assures good angling when the river is in angling size; but although it has a large supply of water from the loch such as no other river in the north has, and when the loch is full, continues far longer in good order than any of the other rivers, still it has its fluctuations, and during a long tract of dry summer weather, or even with frosts during spring, it gets much reduced in size, and, during that time, the sport by angling is but inferior, whatever numbers of fish may be in the river. If anglers would consider *that*, as real experienced anglers do, there would be less complaining of this, that, and the other thing, when the real cause of the failure is the weather, and nothing else.

The section of the river above the Big Fall differs a good deal from that below; for although we have various rapid and rushing streams, these are intermingled with slow and sluggish deep pools. After the 1st of June, when the fish ascend to this part of the river,

with a fresh breeze of wind, and the river in good order, good angling is often got; but here the sport depends partly on the size of water, and partly on the nature of the day. If the water be under a middling size, with the exception of the streams below Lairg Bridge, little can be done. And if the day be bright and sunny, the chance is but small; but towards the latter end of the season, all the pools here are perfectly full of fish, although after the 1st of August, from their having been long in the river, the greater part of them are not fit for killing, and are only fit for early breeders, being now perfectly brown, and full of spawn.

The road from Inveran Inn to Lairg Inn, through Shin Glen, is directly up the right bank of the Shin, and nothing can be more pleasant to the angler than to have such an excellent road by which he can, with so much ease, travel from the one pool to the other. The beauty of the budding birch overhanging the road, with the whole banks covered with heather, along with the romantic rocks, and the impetuous roar of the Linn, intermixed with the song of the thrush and skylark, will always be found inducements to wander along the lovely banks of Shin. Inveran Inn is situated at the west end of Shin Bridge, and

overlooking some of the best spring pools of the river. In fact, from the parlour of the inn the salmon can be seen leaping in the pool below. This inn, of curious architecture, is without any regular shape or form, to look at from without. It is certainly a rare piece of invention, and within we find it a house of many mansions. Yet for all these antiquarian structures, we find it an excellent retreat for the angler; and the comforts within are such as we will not find in many first-rate hotels. A daily mail and post-office is also established here, with a post gig from Tain, carrying the mails and passengers. This gig leaves Tain on the arrival of the mail-coach from the south, whereby travellers from the south can get direct on to Inveran Inn without halting. On passing up Shin Glen, about half way to Lairg, on the right we pass the house and gardens of Achany, one of the seats of Sir James Matheson, but for the last three years the house and shootings have been occupied by Mr. Jervis, from Staffordshire in England, as fine an honest gentleman as ever crossed the borders in search of deer and muirfowl. After crossing Grudock River, a tributary of Shin, we pass through a bleak, bare, rugged property (Gruids), also belonging to Sir James Matheson. This property is thickly dotted with

small tenant-cottars, and *rickles* of coarse unshapely stones. Here, on the borders of a barren moss, we pass a neat Free Church and manse. Both buildings seem suitable for the purpose they were intended, being entirely free from the folly and extravagance we see in other quarters. Here we cross the river by a bridge lately erected, and arrive at Lairg Inn, occupied and well conducted by Mrs. Torrance, whose hospitality is well known to travellers and sportsmen who visit this locality. This inn is situated on the banks of Loch Shin, and is well adapted for anglers who intend to fish the loch, or the upper part of the river.

Loch Shin is a fine sheet of water, nearly twenty miles long by about two miles broad at the broadest, and varying down to half a mile. The depth varies from five fathoms to twenty-two and a half, of six feet per fathom. About a mile below Island Fiack, the depth is five fathoms; a mile and a half above Arskick, ten and a half fathoms; opposite Arskick, nearest the Arskick side of the loch, twenty-two and a half fathoms; opposite Shinness lime quarries, a quarter of a mile out from Shore, seventeen and a half fathoms. From this to the lower end of the loch the depth gets gradually less, and from Island Fiack to the top we find the deepest parts less than five



fathoms, and less as we get towards the top. There are four islands in Loch Shin, the largest of which is Island Fiack, where often a good dinner has been cooked and eaten by anglers on the loch. There are other three smaller islands in Loch Shin ; but like many other ancient names, the names of the islands in Loch Shin have also been changed. The ancient names here were Ellan Murie, Ellan Donald, Ellan Seyad, and Black Ellan. These islands are still much frequented by wild geese, gulls, cormorants, and cranes, where they are safe to hatch their young, as the only human visitors are the anglers, who seldom disturb the operations of these interesting fowl. Loch Shin has four principal feeders :—1st. The river Garvie, which discharges the water of Loch Gream ; this loch receives the water of Loch Merkland and Loch Reirrey by a fair-sized river. 2d. The River Curr, that gathers in the mountainous district of Curry Kinloch. 3d. The River Fiack, that issues out of Loch Fiack, situated at the base of Ben Hee, a wild, high and rocky hill, in whose corries are to be found the finest deer in the county ; and, 4th. The River Terry, which drains the country from the base of the lofty Ben Clibrick. There are also a number of burns from the small glens and hollows on each side of the loch,

which add greatly to the supply of water from these four rivers that fall into the loch. After a few days of rain, with these supplies the loch gets very full, and from the large extent of surface, it keeps a beautiful supply of water to the river Shin for many days. The loch is perfectly full of trout of various kinds, from the *Salmo ferox* of twenty pounds down to the yellow trout of half a pound, and a fair angler, on any day from the 1st of May to the end of the season, may kill five or six dozen of trout, varying from four to half a pound. This species of trout take the fly very well. But the *Salmo ferox*, and all the large trout are most successfully fished for and caught by trolling with the minnow, and these large trout are got best in the upper half of the loch. Mrs. Torrance, the innkeeper at Lairg, keeps nice light boats for the use of anglers on the loch, and gillies can be got in the neighbourhood. I would particularly recommend as two, George, at the Ferry, and Donald Fraser, the old miller. Both know well the haunts of the trout, and both can tell as good, impossible stories as need or ought to be told. On the whole, Lairg is a pleasant and agreeable situation for trout fishers at any time after the 1st of May; and as there is but little travelling necessary, the invalid has the same opportunity

of amusement as the man of vigour and strength.

The salmon-fishing on the River Shin is leased to Mr. Andrew Young, by whom it is let by the day or otherwise for four rods.

We have now concluded a short description of the *thirteen* principal rivers in the county belonging to his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, but have omitted many small streams frequented by sea-trout, and sometimes, in the latter end of the season, by salmon. On all we have mentioned, regular salmon-fisheries are carried on either by net or rod. We have also mentioned a few of the principal lochs where trout-fishing can be carried on with great success; but there are hundreds of lochs, equally or nearly as good, that we have not noticed, for the reason that but few tourist-anglers would care to penetrate so far into the heart of the country; but if they should incline to do so, we tell them that these hundreds of lochs exist, and that a tour over the interior of this interesting county will be well worth their trouble; and as excellent roads lead to within a few miles of the innermost lake in the county, and the only difficulty of reaching them from the road is just a pleasant walk over a hill. We have also noticed a few

of the remarkable and interesting places that are to be seen when making a tour of the county, and which anglers may visit from the different rivers. This has been done principally for the purpose of saving inquiry, and for introducing to notice places which no stranger would willingly pass unobserved. We have not intended to give a general history of the county, but merely to point out what may be desirable to the angler, along with the sport of the rivers and lakes. Although we have concluded the account of the Duke's rivers, there are still two which are partly in this county, although belonging to other proprietors, that we require to notice before leaving the county of Sutherland.

#### XIV.—RIVER CASSLEY.

This is a small river which forms the boundary-line between the properties of Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown and Sir James Matheson, the proprietor of Rosehall. The right side of the river belongs to Sir Charles Ross, and the left side to Sir James Matheson. Its first origin is from a small loch near the top of Glencassley, where it is soon augmented by large burns from several other lochs. After proceeding downwards several miles, it

reaches the fall of Glenmuick, a fall over which no fish can pass ; and after proceeding downwards for about eight miles, we arrive at the Cassley Fall. This fall is a succession of ragged rocks, over which the river flows in time of flood ; but when the river is less, these irregular rocks, pointing various ways, form the river into several streams, over which the fish can pass by winding their way, and resting in several eddies. From this fall to the mouth of the river, where it falls into the Kyle of Sutherland at Invercassley, is not above two miles ; but in this space there are several good angling pools when the river is a little flooded, or in a day after a large flood. But from the principal supply of water here being only the hill burns, the river never continues long in good angling trim. If the ravines of the hills get properly filled with the winter snow, and part of it remain there till April, as it often does, the melting snow during that month keeps the river in fair order for most part of the month ; and as April is the principal month of the season for this river, in that case good sport may be depended on. But on the other hand, if the snow comes down rapidly in the month of March, and dry weather sets in in April, as sometimes is the case, then the river is not worth stretching a

rod on, and the principal fishing is lost. For a day or two after a summer flood, a few fish will be got in these low pools; and towards the latter end of the season, that stretch of water between the Cassley Fall and the Fall of Glenmuick sometimes produces a little sport; but the fish got there at that season are in general inferior. The moss-coloured water and the high temperature of the atmosphere very soon reduce them to an inedible condition.

Glen Cassley is a very pleasant walk for the angler, being a good deal dotted with clumps of natural birch, and some small patches of meadow ground near the river; but as we ascend the hills on each side, we find the ground dry, barren, and hard, and not at all what a practical judge of sheep-pasture would pronounce very good or very safe. After we overtop the hills we fall in with several lochs, whose numerous trout produce excellent sport, and from their elevation they are a pleasant retreat from the low sun-beaten valleys we have left behind. The mail-car from Lairg to Lochinvar, carrying passengers, crosses the Cassley by a stone bridge of one arch, about a mile below the Cassley Fall, on the left of which we see Rosehall House, a large modern building, and one of the seats of

Sir James Matheson ; and on the right, a small distance from the road, we see the ruins of Achness Castle. A little farther on, on the left, stand the ruins of Castle Ne-goire, now called Castle Ne-core. From Cassley Bridge to Oykel Bridge and Inn is seven miles. The road leads up the side of the hill on the left side of the river Oykel, which affords an excellent view of the windings of that river during the course of those seven miles.

The salmon-fishing on the Cassley is not let, and strangers would probably obtain permission by applying.

#### XV.—RIVER OYKEL.

This river issues from Kinloch Ailsh (in ancient times Kean-Logh Gilsh), and on its downward course is augmented by the river from Loch Aldi-Ne-Geale-Gigh and Lubcray River, before it reaches the Oykel Fall. These rivers, although too small for regular fisheries in the summer time, with the exception of the time they are high flooded, are excellent nurseries for the fish in breeding time. The rivers at that time, in general, are above the summer size ; and although even a good deal flooded, the fish are quite able to deposit their ova in the midst of the stream, thereby secur-

ing abundance of water during hatching time. Oykel Fall is a formation of irregular rocks that divide the river into a number of small streams, intermixed with time-worn pots and eddies. The fish swim from pot to pot, in some of which they rest for a considerable time; and from these they are scooped out with a hoop-net, fixed on the end of a long pole. This is the only way that net-fishing is practised in this upper part of the river. On the summit of a rocky bank, on the right side of the fall, is to be seen a few old fir trees, said to be the only remains of the old Sutherland forests that at one time covered nearly the whole face of the country. From this fall to the mouth of the river, where it falls into the tideway at Castle Ne-gair, is, by the windings of the river, about eight miles, and on this course the principal angling is situated. As on all rivers, the lower pools are where the fish are to be got earliest; but although that be the case here also, there are no early fish got on this river, for scarcely any fish are got here earlier than April, and but few then; but during the summer months, very good angling is got when the river is a good size; but its greatest fault is, that from its being principally fed by the small rivers above mentioned, and by burns from the side



glens, it only continues a short time in good trim, unless rain falls day after day. Among the best pools, when the river is in a middling size, are those situated between the fall and the bridge, and for a mile below the bridge; the water here runs rough, rapid, and narrow, being formed of rushing streams and foaming deep pools. The narrowness of the river renders it easily fished by the rod; but from its being rocky, it needs good experience to land the fish after they are hooked. A mile below the bridge this river is joined by the Eanog. The Eanog is a narrow, long-run, rocky river, where a few very fine salmon are got. These fish are large, and the finest-shaped fish that enter the Kyle of Sutherland; but from a nearly impassable fall not far from the mouth of the river, which prevents the fish from reaching the principal spawning-ground, the fish here do not increase, and cannot do, unless the proprietor, Sir Charles Ross, shall reduce this fall so as to allow the fish to ascend to the proper breeding-ground. Near the mouth of the river, where it falls into the Oykel, is an excellent angling pool, where large numbers of fish congregate throughout the summer; for those that are prevented from getting over the fall, fall back into this deep and easy pool, where, with a fresh breeze of wind, sport is

almost certain. For two miles below this junction the Oykel is rough and rocky, and in several of the pools fair angling is got ; but from Langwell to the mouth of the river it is composed of gravel fords, with deep, broad, and rather still pools between. This portion of the river requires a good supply of water and a fair breeze of wind, before good sport can be got. However, these things happen at times, and during that time the sport here is very good. Towards the latter end of the season, the portion of the river between the fall and Kinloch Ailsh often produces fair sport ; but, like the tops of rivers in general, the fish here very soon turn dark, full of spawn, and useless. Yet, notwithstanding, we have seen unsportsmanlike anglers kill fish in such places when they were on the very brink of the spawning-beds, as most of the fish near the tops of rivers are by the middle of August ; and proprietors of rivers would do well to confine angling at that season to the lower parts of their rivers, where only the late and clean fish are to be got, and save the dark and early breeders, which are the only safe and sure propagators of their kind.

The salmon-fishing on the Oykel is at present let to a sportsman.

Oykel Inn is situated close to Oykel Bridge,

and a central station for anglers who intend to fish that principal part of the river, as a number of the best pools are near the inn. On returning from Oykel Inn, about three miles on our way down, on the right side of the river, we see Langwell Cottage, situated on a fine, level, and extensive meadow; and proceeding a mile farther on, we pass the ancient battle-field of Tuttim-Tarwigh, where a bloody battle was fought about the year 1400 between M'Leod of Lewis and his clan on one side, and the Mackays of Strath Naver and Sutherlanders on the other. We have no accounts of which side had the most men; but from the events of the battle, we conclude that the most numbers were on the side of the Sutherlands and Mackays, for the reason that the whole clan M'Leod, with their chief, with the exception of one man, were left dead on the battle-field. This only survivor was wounded; and as soon as he arrived in Lewis and told the tidings, he also died of his wounds. The name of the battle-field, Tuttim-Tarwigh, means the field of blood, or plentiful slaughter. Numerous cairns marked the battle-field, part of which, I am sorry to say, has been driven off by the tasteless to erect stone dykes. Opposite this are two or three townships of small tenants, who occupy a considerable quantity

of low land, along with the pasture of the hills on the right side of the river. These tenants, a race of fine hardy Highlanders, live in comparative comfort and easy circumstances, always ready at rent-day. On the whole this is an interesting strath, at the foot of which the waters of the Oykel and Cassley mingle together and form the upper part of the Kyle of Sutherland. From this to Bonar Bridge is about thirteen miles, along which the tide flows; and at Bonar Bridge the Kyle receives the waters of the

#### XVI.—RIVER CARRON.

This river takes its rise from several lochs high up in the deer-forest of Balnagown. The united streams from these lochs form the then small river, which runs down a long strath until it reaches a narrow pass between the hills, where it falls over a barrier of rock, forming a beautiful waterfall. The boiling caldron underneath is of an oval form, and the outlet of the water through a narrow neck between rocks. When a large flood happens in the river, more water comes over the fall into this boiling pool than the narrow outlet can discharge, which raises the water in the pool to a considerable height on the fall rocks;

and this is the only time that fish can pass over this wild and romantic spot. A short distance below this fall the Carron is a good deal increased by the water of the Glencalvie river, a small river collected from the wild Glencalvie and Corevalegan forest; and when rains fall in these glens, or the snows are melting, this river discharges a considerable quantity of water. About a mile below this junction, the Carron is again considerably augmented by the Blackwater of Strath Coulanach, which drains another strath farther north, after which addition the Carron is a good-sized river. It now runs down Strath Carron for a distance of near twelve miles, and falls into the tideway of the Kyle of Sutherland a little above Bonar Bridge. This is not an early river; and although it falls into the Kyle four miles farther down than the river Shin, which gives clean fish all the winter months, there are no clean fish got here earlier than April, and but few even at that time; and if salmon are to be looked for so early, it must be about the Gledesfield pools, some of which are deep and rocky and, well suited for the fish resting in. However, about the 1st of May the fish run up the river, and then the fishing is good in the Greenyard pools, and all the way up to Pool-Moral, at

**Brae Langwell House.** At Pool-Moral there is a low sloping fall, over which the salmon have no difficulty of ascending later in the season; but the first-run fish incline to rest for days in this deep and sheltered pool before proceeding farther up the river, and the angling for some distance below this fall is very good. Although later in the season the fish here go up freely, these pools are favourite casts all the season, while the pools higher up are also very good. During summer, and after a flood, the pools at Amat are good, and also up the Blackwater as far as the fall. But one great drawback is, that it continues so short time in good angling trim, being fed by so many small rivers and glen burns. As soon as rain begins to fall, these rivers begin to rise; and as soon as fair weather returns, the water takes off like a tide, and often so fast, that the fish who enter the river with the flood have not time to reach the upper part of the river; and, of course, in such cases, the angler will find the lower parts of the river the best. But when the weather is dry, clear, and sunny, whatever number of fish may be in the river, scarcely any sport can be got; and in cases of that kind the angler should, if possible, study to meet the falling rain at the river side; and if he does so, he may depend on a few days of good sport.

One great preventive to the increase of salmon in this river, is its being in the hands of so many proprietors. The upper part, for a number of miles above the fall, is the property of Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown. At the Carron Fall, the right side is the property of Major Robertson of Kindeace, and the left side that of Mr. George Ross of Pitcalnie; and farther down the river, the left side still belongs to Pitcalnie, and the right side to Mr. Matheson of Ardross. Where the Blackwater joins the Carron, the right side belongs to Pitcalnie, and the left side to Mr. Ross of Invercarron. At Brae Langwell, the left side is the property of Sir Charles Ross, and the right side that of Major Robertson of Kindeace. At Downie, the right side belongs to the Marquis of Stafford; and below that, on the Gledfield property, belongs to the Duke of Sutherland. Opposite this, on the property of Invercarron, is the property of Mr. Ross of Invercarron. Among all these proprietors, only two, Sir Charles Ross and Mr. Ross of Pitcalnie, act in the least as conservators of the river. To be sure, the parts that belong to the Duke of Sutherland and Marquis of Stafford are far below the portion of the river where salmon in general breed, and therefore require little or no protection during that time. But the mul-

titude of upper proprietors, on whose parts of the river the fish breed, cannot be considered blameless, as they do not at all fulfil the part of duty that belongs to such property. It is unfortunate for the general good when such property falls into the hands of careless proprietors, for with due care and management, along with the natural resources of this river, salmon could be increased to a number which would alike benefit the proprietor and the country.

Strath-Carron, on the whole, is romantic and interesting. Near the Pass we have the fine hills of the Balnagown deer-forest, the wild and rocky hills of Glencalvie, with the river winding through the narrow glen, which was once the residence of a branch of the clan Ross. At the junction of Carron and Blackwater, on a fine wooded peninsula, stands the house of Amat, with its nice gardens and shrubbery, the residence of Mr. Ross of Pitcalnie. Hence the road leads down the banks on the left side of the river, where the river winds through a rough rocky channel. We now arrive at Brae Langwell House, a summer seat of the Balnagown family. This is a neat modern house, finely situated among old trees, and surrounded by beautiful grass parks, with a border of various kinds of hardwood between



them and the river, the whole of which is tastefully laid out. The strath below this, on both sides of the river, is occupied by small tenants, whose sons and daughters are the very picture of health and happiness. On the right side of the river we see Gledefield House, which belongs to Mr. Matheson of Ardross, but is occupied, along with the shootings, by Mr. Horatio Ross, the famed rifle shooter, who often brings down the deer right and left, and at long distances. The banks of the river here, as well as part of the hills, are thickly covered with wood, and the walks along the banks are beautiful. About a mile farther on we arrive at Ardgay Inn, which is well kept by Mr. Kinghorn. The anglers will find here everything comfortable, and plenty of the best of both meat and drink.

## RIVERS IN THE COUNTY OF CAITHNESS.

### I.—THE RIVER THURSO.

This river is the property of Sir George Sinclair of Thurso Castle, and the only good salmon river in the county of Caithness. Its

origin is from several lochs in the heights of the parish of Halkirk ; of these Loch More is the principal ; but after leaving Loch More, the river is joined on its way down by the streams from at least a dozen of other lochs. Its course downward is through bleak and bare moor for more than twenty miles, before it reaches Halkirk village. In all that course there is not so much as a birch tree to brighten the scene. When it reaches Halkirk, the course of the river is enlivened by fine meadows, through which the river passes, and large farm-houses on the banks. It falls into the sea at Thurso Bay, close behind Thurso Castle. The whole course between this and Loch More, from which it proceeds, is upwards of thirty miles. This is an early river. In former times, when the laws were made to suit the rivers, and not the rivers to suit the laws, large numbers of salmon were caught here in December and January, and we yet wonder that Scotch proprietors can rest contented and see the best half of their property thrown to the wind by an English Parliament. Our Scottish Rights Association take up their time with mere moonshine, such as what paw of a lion should be up and what down ; whereas, were they to watch over the real Scottish rights, it would be to see that no

part of Scotch property should be hurt or destroyed by acts regarding matters of which the legislators are quite ignorant. This would be guarding Scotch rights in the right way ; but as long as they continue with trifling things about prerogative and long extinct ceremonies, they can neither be useful nor respected, and by such carelessness the proprietor of the River Thurso has lost half the value of that river. Yet, notwithstanding the remaining spring months, weather permitting, produce excellent salmon-fishing. No river in the north of Scotland of its size will give better sport. There are many excellent angling pools, but as in all rivers, the lower are the best early in spring. If, however, the pools are slow run when the river is of an under size, a fresh breeze of wind is an improvement. But anglers need not expect any river during several months on end to be always in killing trim ; for in course of the spring months we are very liable to frost and snow, and sometimes frosts without snow. The frost very soon dries up the water of the river, and ice covers the still pools. All these things happen to Thurso River as well as others, and more so than to a rapid rocky river ; and in such cases anglers begin with slow grumblings—the fish will not rise—imagination get rife ;

and then they come to the conclusion that there are no fish in the river ; so and so has killed them all in the early part of the season ; indeed he must have done it in close time ; and then a storm of discontent breaks out, that never ceases until the storm of frost breaks, and the ice melts on the pools, and then it is found that there are plenty fish in the river, and that the storm alone prevented the sport. Although Thurso is a first-rate spring river, it is not in proportion so good a summer river ; for during summer the fish run up much faster than they do early, and thereby soon pass the prime angling pools ; and as there is no obstruction here to prevent the progress of the fish, many of them reach and enter Loch More, where excellent sport among salmon, grilse, sea-trout, and fresh-water trout is got at any time in the course of summer, unless the day be clear, sunny, and calm ; and when that happens, good sport late in the evening is certain. But anglers have all such a custom of dining so late in the afternoon, that in general they lose the best part of the day ; for, as I said above, in describing another river, the angling • during summer, particularly when rivers are low, should be from four to eight o'clock in the morning, and from six to ten o'clock in the evening ; for midday angling in such cases destroys

the pools, and prevents the fish from taking the fly even at a later hour. These hours are not inapplicable also to loch fishing, only with this difference, that with a fresh breeze or wind, sport can be got on the loch at any time of the day, whilst in the river it cannot.

Mr. Dunbar of Brawl Castle, near Thurso rents this fine early river from Sir George Sinclair, the proprietor, and lets it by the month or by the season; and as Mr. Dunbar pays due attention to the protection of the river at all seasons, he has increased the number tenfold since it came into his occupation; for at that time the river was in an ill-used and reduced state. Mr. D. can accommodate anglers both at Brawl Castle and at Strathmore Lodge, both places being well situated for convenience to the river. There are also many other fine lochs among the hills and glens where excellent trout are abundant and large, some of them above six pounds weight; and for a travelling rod-in-hand tourist, nothing can be more pleasant than a journey here from loch to loch, where he can have full amusement for weeks together.

## II.—RIVER FORSS.

This is a small stream collected principally

from hill burns in connection with lochs. It drains the glens on the north coast of Caithness for sixteen miles, and in its course downwards it receives the water of Loch Shurery, which is famed for its number and size of trout. On this river, which falls directly into the North Sea, good sea-trout fishing is got; and after it is flooded in July or August, grilises are also caught with the fly. When taken in connection with the many lochs in this neighbourhood, fair amusement may be got at several times in the course of the summer. But it can scarcely be noticed here as a salmon river. The Water of Wester, issuing from Loch Wester, and falling into Scarlet Bay, and the River of Wick, although both are streams where at times salmon and sea-trout are caught, and may produce sport to gentlemen who reside near these streams, we could not recommend to anglers from a distance. But in this neighbourhood there are several lochs where excellent sport can be got for the trout fisher. Loch Scarlet produces large trout, some of the yellow species more than five pounds weight. These may be caught either with the fly or minnow; the minnow will be found here a deadly lure in the evenings, or during the summer nights, and the fly in a breezy day. Near this loch is Loch Yarrows, which is also a reputed loch

for sport and the size of the trout. But the most famed loch in this locality is Loch Watten, situated between Wick and Thurso. This loch contains several varieties of trout ; one kind in particular seems to be a cross between the sea-trout and the natives of the loch. Several years ago sea-trout had access to this loch, and also to its feeders, where the loch-trout deposit their spawn, and by their uniting and thereby mingling their seed, there is no doubt but this peculiar trout is the offspring. There are various other kinds of loch-trout here, and, on the whole, the trout fisher can find very good amusement as soon as the May-fly appears on these waters.

The salmon-fishing of the River Forss is not in the proprietor's own hands.

### III.—DUNBEATH RIVER.

This, to appearance, should be a good river ; it is larger than some others that produce considerable numbers of salmon. It falls into the sea several miles to the east of Berriedale ; and as the situation of its mouth appears such as to attract fish to enter, we are surprised to find it visited by so view of the salmon kind. It is impossible to blame natural causes for this scarcity of fish here, for that would be

entirely against the provisions of nature in such a situation. We must therefore conclude that the want of salmon here is entirely owing to artificial causes. It is likely that this is one of the long-neglected rivers (many of such we have), whose race of salmon have from time to time been exterminated. This property, in some age, has been under the management of a careless proprietor, who has allowed his clan or followers to exterminate the race of fish belonging to the river, and his successors, finding nothing there worth their attention, have still left the river in that unprotected state; whereas, if the very few that ascend the river were protected during the season, and more particularly during the breeding time, this would soon become a nice salmon river and not be an entire blank in creation, as it has been for many years. Dunbeath and Daunray, the seats of a branch of the Sinclairs, the then Earls of Caithness, was the scene of many murderous transactions, the sword and the gallows-hill being the only protection of property; and the then powerful but cruel Earls of Caithness, who respected the property of friend and foe alike, were no doubt the means of the destruction of this property also.

The salmon-fishing of the Dunbeath is unlet.



## IV.—LANGWELL AND BERRIEDALE RIVERS.

These two small rivers unite a short distance above where they fall into the sea at the north-east base of the Ord, the hill that divides the counties of Sutherland and Caithness. Although these two rivers are but small, yet, during floods in summer, they are well supplied with salmon, and in course of that time fair angling is got. There are numbers of deep and rocky pools in which the fish rest after running up through the rapid streams, and in these the fish rise very well to the fly. The angling here would be immensely improved by removing a cruive situated near the mouths of the rivers; but this is altogether a consideration of the proprietor (formerly Mr. Horne, now the Duke of Portland), whether the river would be of most value with the cruive off or on; for, if the cruive was removed, there is no other way of catching the salmon but with the rod. Only a small portion of them can be caught that way, and I fear anglers would grudge to pay as much for the river as a mere angling stream as the proprietor now gets for it as a cruive-fishing. I cannot see reason why a proprietor should make any such sacrifice to advance the sport of others, unless they are willing to pay for it;

and none of these small rapid rocky rivers can be fished otherwise than with a cruive near the mouth, and by means of the rod. But notwithstanding the cruive here being continued, if it be regulated in all respects according to law—that is, the bars of the cruive-hecks three inches apart, and the “Saturday slap” regularly kept open—the angling above the cruives will be very good. But if all these things are neglected, and a close cruive kept in, little angling need be expected; but to see all these things properly attended to is the angler’s look-out, and then they will find good sport at any time the river is in fair angling trim after May.

The Inn of Berriedale is close to this river, situated at the north base of the wild and romantic hill of Ord, over which the road to Wick and Thurso passes, which, during winter, is the most wild and difficult road to the north of Inverness. And Berriedale Inn, situated in the bottom of a deep picturesque glen, so beautiful in summer, is quite the opposite in winter, for the drifting snows from either side find shelter in immense quantities on the bottom and sides of the glen. In summer this is a pleasant and convenient residence for anglers; the young and strong have steep hills and wild glens to explore, and the invalid

has amusement at the river close to the door. The mail-coach from both south and north calls at the inn daily. In times long gone by the hills of Berriedale were the battle-fields of many a murderous conflict, where friends and neighbours met for the mere purpose of being killed, or to kill; and as the residence of Lord Berriedale, the Earl of Caithness' son, was here, from which place he took his title, here bloody conflicts happened often to take place on the top of the Ord, to which spots tradition and numerous cairns still point out.

The salmon-angling on these two rivers is at present let to a sportsman.

### CONCLUSION.

We have now given the angler a short account of the twenty principal rivers in the two northern counties, and also of a few of the remarkable places near these rivers, and on the way from one river to another, so that these places may be explored and visited without the assistance of any other guide. We have left untouched many small rivers and streams which salmon and sea-trout often frequent, but are not numerous enough for the occupation of the salmon-fisher, but are rather in the way of tourists travelling rod in hand

from place to place, who may have a cast at a salmon or sea-trout in the passing. I have also left unmentioned hundreds of fresh-water lakes among the hills and glens, by far too numerous even to name here; but I agree fully with the "old historian" of Sutherland, who says,—“That there's not a township in Sutherland that cannot have abundance of fish from loch or river, every day of the year.” At that time all the country villages, for where a small cluster of houses were built near each other, was called a township; for that expression did not at all mean the whole houses in a strath. Such was the abundance of fish in the lochs in these days, that a considerable quantity of the food of the country could be easily procured from those lakes, and yet the quantity was never known to diminish. Like the manna in the wilderness, every day brought with it a new supply.

We need not here attempt to give a list of flies suitable to the different rivers we have named, for in that respect “one man's meat is another's poison.” I could easily give a list of the flies likely to kill, and that have killed well on these rivers; but of what use would it be, when we don't see two on the same river use the same kind of flies? The fact is, that the fly that killed the last fish is always con-

sidered best, whatever be its shape, size, or colour, until some one supersede it with another. Therefore it would be quite superfluous to say to an experienced angler to fish with this or that fly.

But I would seriously warn anglers against "striking the fish," and "pulling hard," two terms well understood by the fishing fraternity. Striking the fish means giving the rod a sudden upward jerk, as soon as the fish breaks the water to catch the fly. This is a vile practice that has crept in among anglers of late years. It was recommended by some inexperienced angler, who was probably a man of fashion, and men of fashion followed it, for with many a one, "better be out of the world than out of fashion." This custom has now crept in among anglers to such a degree, that many, otherwise good anglers, thereby lose more than half the fish they could otherwise kill; and when they have practised it for some time, they cannot give it over. By that upward jerk of the rod, they pull the fly entirely away from the fish before it gets time to catch it; and then the clouds, the size of the river, or some other imagination, is blamed for the want of sport, when the whole is that fault of the angler. The angler says, "The fish are rising very well to-day, but I don't

know the reason they are not hooking well ;” when the real reason is, that he keeps the fish catching at a shadow, for he has the hook pulled away, with his jerking, long before the fish can catch it. The regular motion of working the fly should never be altered or departed from at the appearance of a fish. The fish should be allowed to catch the fly from the regular working motion. Always allow the fish to pull first, and from his downward dart with the fly he is sure to hook himself, and that securely. And when the fish is hooked, be sure that you don’t pull hard, for that is a most dangerous practice, by which many a hook and many a fish is lost. Allow the fish to run, hold no tighter than the strength of a single gut, although the fish is hooked and running wildly up and down the stream. Perhaps the hook has only a skin hold, and by pulling hard the skin soon gives way, and off goes the fish ; or perhaps the fish may be well enough hooked, but the point of the hook resting on a bone, and by pulling hard, the hook breaks at the bend, and off goes the fish ; or the fish may be what is called “sure hooked,” and yet the haste and agitation of the angler, and his hurry to land the fish induces him to hold and pull so hard, that “fizz” goes the line at the top of the rod, and

off goes the fish, encumbered with thirty yards of line, hook and all, and the angler stands as if he were elf-shot, and curses Donald the gilly for losing the fish, when the fact is, the fish was never within ten yards of Donald all the time he was *on*. There is some excuse for a young angler losing his first fish in that manner from agitation, and want of the proper weight of his hand; but when anglers of twenty years' standing, and who are considered first-rate casters and hookers of fish, play the fool in that way, they are inexcusable; and when I state, that I have known one good caster and hooker in one month lose ninety fish, all of which were hooked so well, that at least eighty of the ninety would have been landed by any cautious fisher. I never like to hear of this foolish brag, of having landed an eighteen-pound fish in ten minutes, and an eight-pound grilse in five minutes—that's the work of a butcher, and not of an angler; for giving a fish fair play, and an angler fair sport, from thirty to thirty-five minutes is little enough time to play a fish of eighteen pounds. Some may take more, but few less, with fair play, and from fifteen minutes to twenty minutes for an ordinary grilse. I have seen both good anglers and bad; but the really good angler is the one who has the fortitude

to give the fish fair play, and himself fair sport, who neither "strikes the fish" nor "pulls hard." I am aware that it is next to impossible to get out of that bad habit after practising it for some years; but as we have annually a new class of anglers who have never before fished for salmon, I write here for their benefit in particular, and tell them that it is easier to get into a bad habit than to get out of it, and by all means to guard against "striking the fish," and "pulling hard."

We would also warn the young angler against endeavouring to cast a long line, for that is a besetting fault in new beginners. They see an old and long-practised hand spin the fly almost across the river, and they think that doing the same would constitute them anglers all at once; but in that they are grossly mistaken; for with a long slack line fish can never be hooked, for the current of the water forces the unbent middle of the line down the stream, dragging the fly down after it, and entirely preventing the proper working of the line. This is a fault that not only the young angler is guilty of, for some of the long-practised fishers fall into the same error; and because some one else hooked a fish at a stone far over, they must attempt to throw the fly to individual spot, without ever considering



that one rod is capable of casting out a much longer line than another, and that the arms of one man are superior in length and strength to those of another. But whatever may be the ability of one over another, no one should attempt to throw a longer line than he can stretch gently over and down the stream at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ . And with the line in that position, the fly will move gracefully towards the land, and continue always in a hooking state. Half the false rises and bad hookings are the angler's fault, because they thrash away at the river in the most random manner, sometimes the fly falling here and sometimes there, and it is by mere accident that a right or hooking cast happens. It is not a long line that is required; it is a line, whether long or short, thrown out in the right direction. And even after the fly is stretched out to the proper place, there must be no hurry in dragging it in again. When fishing a rapid running stream, the current of the water does nearly all that's necessary until the fly comes out of the current, and then a slow upward movement of the rod is required to keep the fly floating and lively. When fishing a smooth and slow-running pool, the line requires to be thrown out in the same direction as we do when fishing a stream; but here the fly has to be kept in motion, and

brought round to shore by moving the rod slowly up and down, and keeping its point towards shore. Try, by all means, to give the artificial fly the same appearance and movement that you see in the natural flies on the surface of the water; and if all these things be properly observed and adhered to, I shall promise that, with a little practice, you will soon be a successful angler.

But I have still a few words more to say to the young angler, and indeed part of the old ones require to be told also—that is, how to take up your position at the pool you intend to fish. Some are in the habit of commencing near the foot or lower end of the pool, and fishing backwards against the stream; this is a reprehensible practice, for it exhibits the splash of the line to the fish when they should only see the fly. Others begin at the middle of the pool, and by their motion disturb the best part of the pool. But an angler should begin as high up the river, as the fly from the first cast will only reach the top of the pool where the fish are expected. And if the angler be on the right side of the river, he must place his left foot foremost, and near the river, or place it firmly on a stone in the river; but whichever of the two, let him be certain that he has a solid footing, and not be stumbling

and tumbling the time he is casting. Catch the rod with the right hand below the winch, or reel, or pirn, as the good old anglers called it, and hold the rod with your left hand at an easy distance above the winch, and then you are in position. Stretch now your fly with a few yards of line—that is your first cast. At the next give a little more line, and continue to do so, until as much line is out as you can stretch with ease, and no more. Then remove down one yard, and stand firm in the same position until you cast the fly three times; for remember that the fish may see the fly the first cast, and not rise to it, but may be tempted to do it at one of the other two casts. You will continue in this way to the foot of the pool, never removing more than a yard at one time, and always giving three offers of the fly at each removal. If you raise no fish this time, rest ten minutes, and change your fly for one of a quite opposite colour, and fish over the pool a second time with the same care as you did the first time. Now, be certain that you don't hurry; for I tell you that patience is one of the principal parts that constitute a good angler. Some anglers run over the best pools with only a few casts, and then declare that there are no fish in the pool; but the patient angler finds fish there as soon as Mr. Short-Temper leaves it.

The young angler must, on no account, continue to fish only on one side of the river, for he must practise on both sides, otherwise he can only cast with one hand, which he is sure at some time to find to be a serious loss, for all rivers don't fish best from the same side ; therefore he must leave the right side of the river that we have described, and turn to the left. There he will entirely change his position, and place his right foot foremost, and catch the rod below the reel with your left hand, and above the reel at an easy distance with your right hand. This is called casting with the right hand, and that on the other side of the river is called casting with the left hand. These are points that must on no account be omitted ; for if an angler learn to throw only from one side of the river, he will find himself in a most awkward position, when he is forced to fish the opposite side of any river. He will find that he can only do it by cross throwing, or casting over the hand, and by doing that, the river cannot be well fished, neither can it be done with ease. We see "Angler's Guides" and "Angler's Companions" out of number, and very many of them only describe how to fish one side of a river ; and it is very likely that the writers of these are but half anglers, never having

fished but one side of a river. We therefore cannot find fault with these practitioners, if they therein describe all that they know themselves. However, they are very far wrong when they say that these are the complete Angler's Guide, when they only state the half of what is necessary ; and it is a most dangerous thing to be in any situation with half learning, where a full education is necessary. I therefore hope that the young angler will pay particular attention to the above instructions, and I shall be answerable that a few months practice will put him over the heads of many who have lashed the pools for a quarter of a century.

When the young angler goes a salmon-fishing, it is necessary to have a gilly or attendant to carry the rod, the basket, the clip, and landing-net ; but the clip should never be used unless among rocks, and by steep and difficult banks, where the landing-net cannot be used. However, the gilly should carry both along with him in case of such necessity, and if possible, the gilly should be one who is well acquainted with the pools of the river, can to a certainty net a fish when it is played near the shore, and never considers the water cold when the feet must go in ; for I must confess that I have no great favour for the gillies I have seen with "plush breeks" and "brushed shoes,"

carrying their master's "haversack" to the river. I think it would be better to leave them at the inn. When a fish is hooked, there must be no hurry or agitation. If he is well hooked, there is no need for hurry; and if he is ill hooked, hurry will not land him. If anything do it, it is by holding easy, as we have described above. By no means let the line slack, but continue an equal easy strain. Unless the fish sulk and lie at the bottom, you may expect to see him on one side in course of half an hour; but if he should sulk and lie down, you must dislodge him by pitching stones to the spot where he rests; for unless you do that, he will, as soon as recovered, go off as fresh as when he took the fly. During the time you are playing the fish, keep well back on the bank, and by all means keep up the point of the rod, and never allow it near the water, or straight out before you; for unless the point of the rod be straight up, you can never know the exact strain you have on the line. When the fish nears the banks, don't be calling to the gilly, "Donald, come here," or, "Donald go there;" for if he be an experienced gilly, he knows the exact time, and never allows a sure chance to pass without netting the fish.

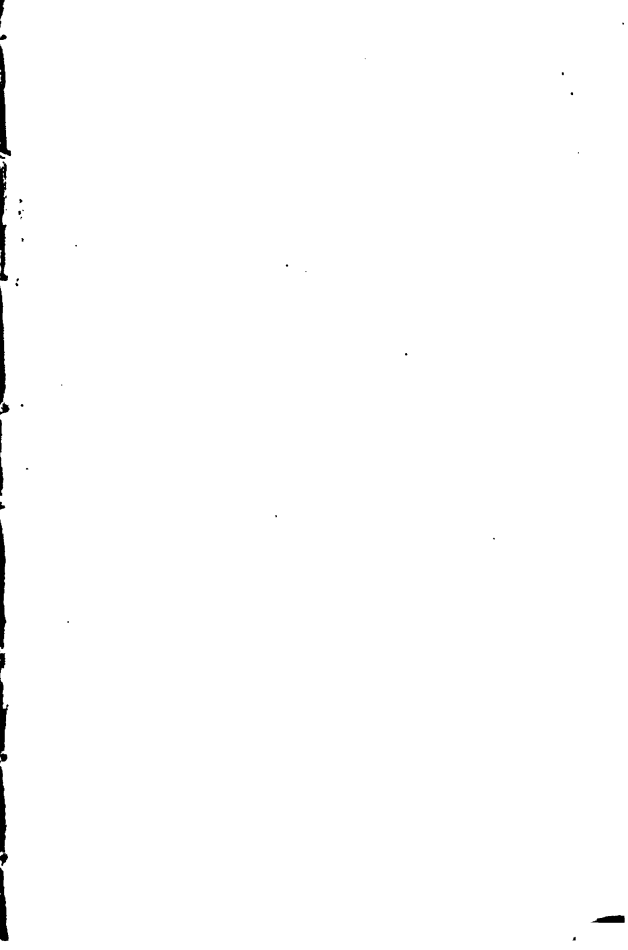
The concluding advice I have to give to the young angler is— Be sure at night to dry

the flies you have been using through the day, and reel off all the wet line from the winch ; examine both the line and gut, lest some parts of it may have come against the sharp ledges of rock ; send the gilly early to bed, and be sure not to drink that stuff that they compound of whisky, sugar, and boiling water. It is bad for muddling the brain, and making you drowsy, and angling requires a clear brain and open eyes ; therefore, I hope you will avoid both the whisky and the water, and your chance of fish will be all the better.

I have now given the young angler an outline of instructions what to do and what to avoid, and if he attends strictly to these rules, with practice and experience, I will warrant him to be a first-rate angler. And if the old and more experienced find any advice worth following, I hope they will take advantage of it ; but most of them are so much built up in their own experience, that, whether right or wrong, they are likely to finish in the same course they have been satisfied with for many years.

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